KNOWING HOW TO KNOW: COMPETENCE AND EPISTEMIC EVALUABILITY

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Abstract

Contemporary epistemologists are overwhelmingly focused on justification and related notions of epistemic normativity, such as responsibility. Yet, before we can evaluate whether a belief is justified or responsibly acquired, there is a deeper concern over whether such evaluations are apt, whether one is the appropriate target of responsibility ascriptions in general. I call this the question of epistemic competence. I examine two possible explanations for when one is the appropriate target of responsibility ascriptions—doxastic control and awareness. When an individual can control their beliefs and/or is aware of what they believe, they are epistemically competent. I argue that neither explanation is sufficient and perhaps not even necessary when it comes to competence. While we do exercise influence over what we believe using our cognitive abilities, we do not control our beliefs. Moreover, since we can rightly be held responsible for our beliefs even in cases where we formed a belief we were unaware we should not have, epistemic awareness likewise fails to adequately explain epistemic competence. Instead, I argue that what opens one up to epistemic responsibility is a constellation of cognitive abilities the exercise or manifestation of which is a kind of know-how. In particular, because the cognitive abilities in question—the abilities to recognize and assess justifying reasons for belief—increase one's reliability at achieving knowledge, to possess those abilities is to know how to know.

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Introduction

A common feature of our lives is that we evaluate each other (and ourselves). We evaluate each other based on our actions and our beliefs. We often think of actions as being careless or callous, good or bad, foolish or calculated. Likewise, we often think of beliefs as being stupid or brilliant or insightful, and individuals as being misguided or careful or slipshod in believing what they do. Sometimes our evaluations imply that an individual is culpable or blameworthy for their action or belief and sometimes our evaluations have broader implications such as those indicating traits of character. These evaluations suggest that we have (or have not) met relevant standards and as such we are subject to certain kinds of attitudes, judgments, and sanctions. Some of these attitudes and judgments we have towards others (and ourselves) are implicit (e.g., when I lose trust in a certain reporter upon learning that he unjustifiably manipulated some of the facts to support his interpretation of an event) and sometimes explicit (e.g., when I call someone out for an action they performed). We also modify our behavior based on both implicit and explicit responsibility ascriptions and judgments. Upon learning that a neighbor neglects keeping an eye on his children because he would rather watch television, I cease to allow my children to play at his house. Regulating our actions and beliefs according to standards and norms (implicit and explicit) is part of rational and social behavior (and perhaps part of what it means to be rational and social creatures).

The kinds of evaluations of interest here are those that treat the individual as a participant in the practice of giving and asking for reasons. Sometimes these evaluations are apt and sometimes they are inapt: sometimes we are altogether exempt from them and sometimes we are excused (either partially or wholly) from being so evaluated. Now an individual might be exempt in different ways. She might simply not have done (believed) the thing for which she is being evaluated, in which case the same kind of evaluation may be appropriate if the individual had done (believed) it. Or, she might fail to be the appropriate target of the evaluation in general. In other words, she might be exempt from (particular kinds of) evaluation because she is not a (full) participant in the context of it; she may have done (believed) something but due to, say, lack of cognitive development fails to be the appropriate target of the evaluation.[1] Young children are exempt from, e.g., responsibility for belief and action and not merely excused; responsibility ascriptions make no sense when directed at young children since they have not yet developed to the point where they are capable of recognizing and responding to the relevant norms. In exempting cases, evaluations are inappropriate in general. This is quite different from situations in which circumstances mitigate the evaluation(s) we direct at someone or where something absolves an individual of relevant participant evaluations. Here the individual may be the appropriate target of that kind of evaluation, in general, but due to extenuating circumstances she may be excused (either partially or wholly) in this particular instance. A journalist may incorrectly report data but only because the expert source misspoke. In which case, she would be absolved of accusations of carelessness. In other words, although she may be appropriately

[1] More precisely, she might fail to be the target of certain kinds of evaluation. Presumably there will always be some kinds of evaluation aptly ascribed to an individual. For example, even if one is not the appropriate target of doxastic responsibility ascriptions, one might be the appropriate target of evaluations centered on action or cognitive faculties or on accuracy. The kinds of evaluations I am concerned with in this work are those that treat the individual as an epistemic participant in the context of evaluation. See §1.1b for further clarification on participant epistemic reactive attitudes.

accused of carelessness in other situations, that accusation is not warranted here. Thus, whether an evaluation is appropriate—whether an individual is exempt or absolved from that evaluation—is a distinct question from whether it is justified or warranted—whether an individual is excused from that evaluation.

What this brings to light is that warranted evaluations presuppose that those subject to them are the appropriate objects of such evaluations, that they are *evaluable*, in general. Put differently, it presupposes that it makes sense to direct those evaluations at them; or, alternatively, that they are normatively competent beings. Here and in what follows, I think of competence in a quasi-legal sense. Before an individual can stand trial she must be deemed competent to stand trial. This entails that she can participate in the trial and that she understands the charges brought against her. Likewise, before an individual can be the appropriate target of participant epistemic evaluations, she must be deemed (implicitly or explicitly) epistemically competent. Among other things, she must be able to understand the reasons for (against) a claim, how to evaluate those reasons and claims, and be minimally capable of adjusting her (degree of) belief in light of new reasons. Additionally, an individual might be competent in general or competent in a specific domain. To illustrate, consider the following cases:[2]

> **Lunar skepticism**: Walter is in his mid-twenties, graduated from college, and now works as a mid-level manager. In his spare time, Walter is an astronomy enthusiast. Recently, after watching a program on the history channel about the conspiracy behind the lunar landing, Walter has become an evangelist of sorts, denying humans have ever landed on the moon.
>
> Emma is a five-year old, the daughter of one of Walter's good friends. Emma loves the air and space museum and is fascinated by the moon. Her parents read to her all about the moon including stories about the lunar landing. One day when Walter was over for dinner, he became enthusiastic about his newfound skepticism

[2] I shall simplify the discussion by focusing here on epistemic responsibility, but shall broaden the discussion to other kinds of evaluation below.

about the lunar landing and told Emma all about it. Now Emma tells everyone that the lunar landing was pretend.

Train Schedule: Raymond, an autistic savant, is extremely reliable at remembering and calculating hundreds of items at once. His brother Charlie relies on Raymond's memory of train tables for an extremely important meeting he must get to. Unfortunately, Raymond gives Charlie the normal operating times; unaware that today is a holiday.[3]

Bipolar Belief: Thom suffers from bipolar disorder but has yet to be diagnosed. Paranoia presents in Thom's manic states. He has just had his first manic break and believes that his wife is cheating on him and begins to accuse her forcefully while hurling terrible insults at her.

In each of these cases, the individual who fails to be subject to responsibility judgments, attitudes, and sanctions fails to be subject to them because of something about him or herself rather than because of something he or she did. In the first two cases, Emma and Raymond are not the appropriate targets of responsibility ascriptions in general—i.e., they are not epistemically competent—whereas in the third case, we may suppose Thom is epistemically competent, in general, but his belief(s) about his wife's supposed infidelity are somehow not relevantly connected to him. Thus, his epistemic competence is undermined in *this* instance and therefore Thom is absolved of any kind of negative evaluations for his belief about his wife's supposed infidelity. Such absolution amounts to a kind of restricted exemption from negative evaluation; he is locally exempt due to his mental illness.

In each case, the subject exempt from responsibility is a paradigmatic example of someone without the right kind of agency or ownership over (the relevant) belief. Emma and Raymond—children and individuals with some kinds of mentally disability—clearly lack the appropriate relation to their beliefs. (It may be more appropriate to say that Emma and

[3] Depending on how we fill in some details, Raymond may be excused or exempted. If Charlie incorrectly told Raymond that he needed normal operating times, then it seems that Raymond is excused. However, if Raymond was simply oblivious to this fact and Charlie did not incorrectly tell Raymond that it is normal operating hours, then it seems that Raymond is exempt. For my purposes, assume the latter. Thanks to Michael Williams for pointing out this ambiguity.

Raymond have belief-like states as opposed to full-blown belief, though my argument about competence will not turn on how one settles this issue.) The third case is suggestive of an epistemic analog to moral temporary insanity. When a person is temporarily insane they lose the appropriate contact with their actions such that they are exempt from moral responsibility.[4] Likewise, Thom loses the appropriate contact with his beliefs regarding his wife's infidelity.

I have been speaking about responsibility, but there is no reason to restrict the idea of competence to responsibility ascriptions. We target individuals with a wide and varied array of evaluations and appraisals—people can be careless, careful, naïve, simple-minded, clever, open-minded, closed-minded, reliable, stupid, dogmatic, and the like—and for each of these evaluations before we can ask whether they are warranted we must first settle (at least tacitly) whether they are appropriate. This work proposes a theory of epistemic competence by answering the question, "under what conditions is an individual the appropriate *target* of person-level epistemic evaluation?"

Themes

In addition to the main line of argument about epistemic competence, two themes recur throughout. A central theme is that there are many different senses of responsibility and if we are not careful to distinguish them, we can either be led to substantive mistakes or fail to

[4] For a discussion of temporary insanity, see Floch, Maurice. "Concept of Temporary Insanity Viewed by a Criminologist, The." *J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci.* 45 (1954): 685.

see the importance of the issue altogether. For example, failure to mark the distinction between the sense of responsibility that implies one is accountable for a belief (acquisition) and the sense that implies that one is merely open to interpersonal epistemic assessment based on that belief (acquisition) has led to a dogged preoccupation with deontic accounts of justification to the exclusion of other forms of epistemic normativity. Beliefs are not only justified or unjustified; they are silly, stupid, insightful, etc., and people are careless, reckless, circumspect, open-minded, clever, and so on in their beliefs as well as their belief acquisitions and maintenance. This work focuses on the conditions an individual must meet to be the apt target of these broader types of assessment.

In characterizing epistemic normativity in terms of the standards that beliefs have (not) met, it is easy to overlook an important feature of epistemic assessment. When we evaluate a belief as silly or careless, we are not in fact assessing the belief at all. Rather, we are assessing the individual based on having (or sometimes failing to have) that belief. This is not to elide the well-known distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. It is to suggest that even in recognizing that distinction we may fail to acknowledge features of the believing subject presupposed in being doxastically justified. For example, suppose Jane comes to believe that p based on sufficiently good reasons and/or evidence. As such, we recognize Jane is entitled to claim to know that p. Ordinarily, a theory of justification that recognizes the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification can stop there. However, suppose Jane is oblivious to the standards and norms governing claims to knowledge, due to some cognitive defect. Suppose further that Jane possesses the same reasons and evidence and believes based upon them, but were she presented with different (subpar) reasons and evidence she would have believed that p based on those reasons and evidence. Now, in ordinary situations Jane's interlocutors, unaware of her cognitive defect, would take her to be

just as entitled. Knowing what we do about her defect, though, we might simply maintain that she is not doxastically justified in her belief. Yet, to do so, we must now include in an account of doxastic justification an explanation of how being related to reasons and evidence in the right way justifies us in our beliefs.[5] It is in an answer to the question of how we must be related to reasons and evidence *in the right way* that we find a place for cognitive character. Competent believers do not merely take in reasons and evidence and form beliefs, they can recognize norms, reflect on and evaluate their reasons and evidence, withhold belief if their reasons are lacking, modify their beliefs in light of new evidence, cultivate habits of clear thinking, train themselves to be circumspect in their assessment of reasons and evidence, and so forth. In this way, epistemic assessment is or presupposes a kind of character assessment. This point raises a second theme: virtue epistemology.

Beginning with Sosa's[6] landmark paper suggesting that deep character traits of the knower are epistemically significant, indeed central, many epistemologists have since argued that character matters in epistemology[7] not only because one's intellectual character puts one in a better position to know things, but rather because one's intellectual character plays a constitutive role in whether one has knowledge at all. It is not difficult to see that giving intellectual virtue pride of place in an account of knowledge has implications beyond providing that account. For example, focus on intellectual virtue has resurrected Meno's

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[5] Note, this point applies to theories that argue for a distinction between propositional and doxastic justification (typically internalist theories) and those that argue that all justification is doxastic justification or well-foundedness (typically externalist theories). Thanks to Michael Williams for pushing me to clarify this.
[6] See Sosa, Ernest. "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (1980): 3–26. Reprinted in Sosa, Ernest. *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[7] Code, L. *Epistemic Responsibility*. (Providence: Brown University Press 1987);
Zagzebski, L. *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Greco, J. *Putting Skeptics in Their Place: The Nature of Skeptical Arguments and Their Role in Philosophical Inquiry*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Greco, J. *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

question, "what makes knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?"[8] Virtue epistemology has also played a central role in questioning whether knowledge is the only (or ultimate) epistemic good.[9]

This work is meant to add to this character turn in epistemology in two important respects. First, because our everyday evaluation of others is more nuanced than whether others are justified or entitled to believe what they do, the richness of virtue and vice vocabulary finds a natural home in discussion of the evaluations that implicate epistemic competence. People form beliefs in ways that are careful, considered, foolish, wise, commendable, laudable, dogmatic, stubborn, detestable, diligent, lazy, and so on. Our evaluations, both implicit and explicit, reflect this and as such a theory of epistemic competence that possesses the resources to mirror or even explain why this is will rely on deep features of the individual being evaluated. Those features may turn out to be epistemic analogues of Aristotelian moral virtues—e.g., cultivated habits of good thinking—or they may turn out to be virtues in a broader sense—e.g., epistemic faculties understood as virtues—or both. Regardless, it is important to note that my discussion of epistemic competence shall display another epistemic dimension where intellectual character matters.

Second, the fact that we can and do evaluate individuals based on doxastic omissions is puzzling until we recognize that omissions are reflective of an individual's patterns of thought, cognitive abilities, and values. If I form a belief on the basis of poor evidence that I should recognize as poor evidence but do not, it says something about what I value and how I think I should exercise my cognitive abilities. So not only does the recognition of intellectual character as epistemically significant open new avenues of research into the rich

[8] See Kvanvig, J. L. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) for a detailed discussion of this issue.
[9] Zagzebki, L. *Virtues of the Mind*; and, "Epistemic Value Monism." *Ernest Sosa and His Critics.* (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2008, 190–198); Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge.*

way we evaluate others, it also allows us to explain old problems like the apt evaluation of doxastic omissions.

The term "virtue" carries with it needless theoretical baggage. I want to avoid misunderstandings about cognitive or intellectual virtues by instead restricting my discussion to cognitive abilities. In addition to obviating unnecessary complications, I have two additional reasons for preferring "abilities" over "virtues". First, it seems that we can be and are evaluated on the basis of vices as well as failure to manifest our virtues. The positive connotation of "virtue" can easily lend itself to missing this important point. Further, when we do fail to manifest a virtue, it is not always because of a vice. The kinds of evaluations we engage in are not only aretaic or deontological. We would do well to remember this and to use terms that do not obviously or easily invite such confusions.

Second, the use of "virtue" instead of the more evaluatively neutral "ability" does not easily translate into the discussion that follows. The central thesis of this work is that an individual is competent if and only if she knows how to know. While intellectual virtue alludes to this, "ability" is more natural since when it comes to know-how, the watershed issue is whether that knowledge is constituted by a propositional attitude or by an ability.

The Plan

I propose to develop a theory of epistemic competence as a kind of ability-constituted know-how. Specifically, a subject is epistemically competent just in case she has the ability to recognize, assess, and revise her beliefs in light of the reasons that count in favor of them—

i.e., justifying reasons. This belief revision might come in the form of: wholesale rejection of a belief in light of new evidence; modification of the belief to fit new information; withholding the belief until one has more reasons; a change in confidence (e.g., one might retain full belief and yet become more open to the possibility that one might be wrong); etc.[10] The argument proceeds in four distinct moves. First, I sharpen the competence question by distinguishing two senses of responsibility and clarifying the kinds of evaluations that implicate epistemic competence. Second, I reject the intuitive idea that doxastic control and/or awareness underwrite the appropriateness of evaluation, hence constitute epistemic competence. Third, I argue that some instances of knowing how to φ are nothing more than instances of having an ability to φ. Finally, I articulate and defend my theory of epistemic competence as knowing how to know.

The first move takes place in chapter one. It is argued that before someone can be responsible—i.e., *accountable*—for a belief she must first be the appropriate target of responsibility ascriptions in general. That is, she must be *evaluable* based on that belief. When an individual is evaluable in this way, she is open to person-level participant reactive attitudes—i.e., attitudes that treat that her as a participant in the epistemic community and not merely as system that hosts beliefs. These two senses of responsibility—one that implicates accountability and one that implicates evaluability—allow us to clarify the competence question by focusing on the conditions for the appropriateness of participant reactive attitudes in general. The concept of epistemic competence as a kind of grounds for evaluability is further sharpened by understanding exemption and excuse. When reactive attitudes are inappropriate, the individual is exempt from them. Intuitively, reactive attitudes

[10] See Harman, (*A Change in View*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986): Ch. 6) on belief revision.

are appropriate when someone is aware of, understands, and is able to exercise some kind of control over what they believe.

I take up the task of the second main move of the argument in chapters two and three. There, I examine whether control (chapter two) and awareness (chapter three) underwrite the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. Once we understand the nature and object of doxastic control and awareness, it becomes clear that neither doxastic control nor doxastic awareness is necessary for epistemic competence. On the one hand, we simply do not control our beliefs, but at best only indirectly influence them. On the other hand, the common practice of evaluating others for their doxastic omissions undermines the putative necessity of doxastic awareness for epistemic competence. Further, neither doxastic control nor doxastic awareness is sufficient to underwrite the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. Since the focus of this inquiry into epistemic competence is our actual practice of evaluating others and we cannot, as a matter of fact, exercise control over belief, the hypothetical ability to exercise control over our beliefs is explanatorily impotent. The argument against the sufficiency of awareness for epistemic competence exploits the fact that awareness is merely passive. As such, mere awareness could not properly connect the believer to the belief (or explain the failure to believe). The argument against control and awareness is not merely critical, however. The discussion reveals that we evaluate others on *how* they believe; epistemically competent individuals know how to know. This insight points to cognitive abilities.

The chief obstacle to an account of epistemic competence as a kind of ability-constituted know-how is the intellectualist contention that all know-how is constituted by or reducible to propositional knowledge. Chapter four argues that some instances of know-how are constituted by mere abilities, thus making the third move of the central argument of this

work. Following an articulation of Ryle's famous regress argument against intellectualist know-how, I develop three arguments that show even sophisticated versions of intellectualism cannot be right and that a modest anti-intellectualism—the view that some know-how is neither constituted by nor reducible to propositional knowledge—is motivated.

Finally, in chapters five and six, I articulate and defend the central thesis of the dissertation, viz., that an individual is epistemically competent if and only if she knows how to know. Adopting the notion of guidance control from the work of John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, I argue that mere processes or capacities become abilities, and therefore cease to be mere processes or capacities, if we can exercise guidance control over them. This entails that those capacities are reasons-responsive—capable of being motivated by reasons that would justify their exercise/manifestation—and owned—such that the subject sees herself as exercising/manifesting the capacity or sees herself as doing something that entails the exercise/manifestation of the capacity.

Following an argument that some cognitive abilities can be (or are) instances of know-how, I present desiderata on a theory of epistemic competence and proceed to argue that one is the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes if and only if one has a constellation of cognitive abilities: the abilities to recognize, attend to, and assess reasons for belief and the ability to revise belief in light of those reasons and that evidence. Together I call this constellation of abilities the ability to believe for normative—justifying—reasons. Since I characterized epistemic competence as being the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes, it follows that having the ability to believe for normative reasons constitutes epistemic competence. What is left to show is that to have this ability is to know how to know. This is demonstrated by considering the object of knowing how to know—reliably achieving knowledge (in conditions propitious to such achievement)—and whether

removing any of the constellation of abilities that constitute the ability to believe for normative reasons would cause one to be unreliable at attaining knowledge. It is argued that if we removed any of the abilities that make up the ability to believe for normative reasons we would indeed be unreliable at acquiring knowledge, at least mature human knowledge. Moreover, I examine whether there might be other abilities or conditions required to be reliable at attaining knowledge or being justified. I argue that the ability to believe for normative reasons fulfills the role of those other putative abilities or conditions and conclude that one is epistemically competent if and only if one knows how to know.

To shore up my argument, I conclude by highlighting virtues of my account by briefly considering several of the cases discussed throughout the work. There I show that an ability-constituted account of epistemic competence addresses intuitions about control and awareness since having an ability entails that one can exercise guidance control over it. While this is not a fully-fledged doxastic voluntarism, it has an affinity with it. In relegating control to our cognitive abilities—in particular the ability to recognize, assess reasons, and revise one's belief—my account has a place for control. Likewise, since guidance control requires ownership and the latter entails a kind of awareness, my view satisfies intuitions about awareness as well. Finally, since the locus of evaluation is the individual, not only are instances of doxastic omission readily explained, but doxastic omissions present further reasons to adopt an ability-constituted account of competence. It is precisely because omissions uncover features of the believing subject such as patterns of thought and/or values, that an agent-centered account of competence, which maintains that such patterns of thought and/or values constitute the individual's cognitive agency, has to be right.

Before we proceed to these issues, I should like to say something about the methodology I employ. Because the issue of general epistemic competence has largely been ignored, there

are no guides to follow or interact with. Therefore, I proceed by way of analogy. For example, when I discuss whether doxastic control underwrites the appropriateness of epistemic evaluation, I examine what role it plays in epistemic *accountability*. Having presented the relevant differences between epistemic evaluability and accountability in chapter one, I then ask how those differences affect the nature and role of doxastic control. Additionally, I look to discussions on *moral* attributability—evaluability—and accountability to provide insight into my investigation of epistemic competence, noting relevant differences along the way. There are recognizable disadvantages to such an approach, but these are, I think, overshadowed by the rich conceptual resources, if not just the vocabulary, of these other more travelled inquiries.

1. The Competence Question

Under what conditions are we the appropriate target of epistemic evaluation? Call this the competence question. Restated, the competence question asks, "Under what conditions is one merely epistemically competent?" In this work, I attempt to answer this question by arguing that epistemic competence is a kind of ability-constituted know-how. But, before I can properly argue for that thesis, much groundwork needs to be laid. Specifically, I must sharpen the competence question and reject some putative answers.

To sharpen the competence question, I have two central tasks. First, to suggest that competence entails that one is the appropriate target of evaluation is to imply there are conditions under which one is an *in*appropriate target of evaluation as well as to imply there are conditions under which one is more than merely an appropriate *target* of evaluation, perhaps the *justified* or *warranted* target of evaluation. So, what sense of "appropriate target" is at issue in the competence question? And how is that sense contrasted with the ways in which someone might be the inappropriate target or more than merely an appropriate target of evaluation? Second, I must further clarify what kinds of assessment are at issue. At the very least, I must provide some constraints on those assessments that offer guidelines as to how one might identify which evaluations are implicated in epistemic competence. With those tasks completed, I will be in a better position to explain the importance of an answer

to the competence question. For it sometimes turns out that once we have made a question more explicit, the answer is ready at hand, or simply not of interest. Why, then, does the competence question matter? Why does it matter philosophically (e.g., what work does it do to help us clarify or think through other problems?) and why does it matter practically (e.g., what, if any, are the pragmatic implications of an answer to it?)?

The explanation of the importance of the competence question brings to the fore three concepts: ownership, control, and awareness. (These three concepts have played a central role in discussions of doxastic and moral responsibility, which I have explained is an important resource in my discussion.) On quick reflection we can recognize their importance. Take any case of putative responsibility and remove any one of these features completely from the picture and the attribution of responsibility begins to lose its intuitive plausibility. In the final section of this chapter, I briefly discuss these concepts and the prima facie ways they may be relevant to epistemic competence; a crucial component of the argument that follows through the rest of this work depends on understanding that their explanatory relevance is determined by the role they play in cognitive agency and not in the discrete situations in which they are appealed to.[11]

1.1. Competence as Reactive Attributability

[11] In chapter two, I focus on control, in chapter three, I examine awareness, and in chapters five and six I argue that ownership of cognitive abilities is constituted by awareness and control.

The idea that one can be the appropriate target of evaluation[12] implies that one might be the inappropriate target of evaluation and that there might be something more than merely being the appropriate target of evaluation. I want to argue that to be competent is to be open to evaluation in such a way that interpersonal or participant reactive attitudes—attitudes ascribing, for example, insightfulness, stupidity, carelessness, blameworthiness, praise, etc.—are appropriate, in general. This is to suggest that competence is a kind or level of responsibility. It is also to imply there are *different* kinds or levels of responsibility. In particular, in claiming that to be competent is to be open to evaluation I am suggesting that there is a kind of responsibility that goes beyond being merely open to evaluation, that there is something beyond being merely evaluable. And, by saying that evaluation is appropriate in general when directed at an individual I am not committed to whether in this particular case evaluation is warranted. Let us say that when a subject is open to participant reactive attitudes based on a belief, then that belief is attributable to them in such a way that they are *evaluable*[13] and that when a particular kind of evaluation is warranted in a specific case, either in principle or in fact, then that subject is *accountable* for that belief.

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[12] I shall use "appropriate target of evaluation", "openness to evaluation", and "aptness of evaluation" interchangeably. I shall also use "evaluable" and its cognates to indicate openness to evaluation and the like. Hence, a subject who is evalua*ble* is open to evalu*ation*.

[13] The discussion in the rest of this section is heavily indebted to Fischer, John M., and Neal A. Tognazzini. "The Physiognomy of Responsibility." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82, no. 2 (2011): 381–417. Their discussion of the concept of reactive attributability—or just attributability—is the analogue for my use of the concept of evaluability. For detailed account of many senses of responsibility, I refer the reader to their paper (and to Watson, G. "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme." in Russell, P and Deery, O (eds.) *The Philosophy of Free Will: Essential Readings from the Contemporary Debates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 84-116, and Smith, A. M. "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life." *Ethics* 115, no. 2 (2005): 236–271.), though I leave out very many of their analytical steps about responsibility. Moreover, their argument concerns moral responsibility for action and there are significant disanalogies between moral and epistemic responsibility. Relevant to the present section, actions are not intrinsically normative whereas beliefs, since they are (at least) tightly bound up with commitments and judgments, are. In chapter two, I argue that we cannot exercise control over belief raising another important disanalogy with moral responsibility for action. Nevertheless, these important points notwithstanding, the distinction between evaluability and accountability is apt in the case of belief.

As it happens, an individual being evaluable for a belief and an individual being accountable for a belief overwhelmingly go together. But, being evaluable is conceptually or analytically prior to being accountable; it is what gets an individual into the accountability game.[14] Just as we might think an individual subject to reactive attitudes based on his actions, in general, could nevertheless fail to be accountable in particular situations, we might think that an individual subject to reactive attitudes based on his beliefs, in general, could nevertheless fail to be accountable for any particular belief. Because the ways we evaluate individuals based on their beliefs varies significantly, we must be careful to circumscribe the sense of "evaluability" at issue. While sharp demarcation is most likely beyond our grasp, we can bring it into clearer focus by pointing to examples (this section), discussing exemption from assessment (§1.2), and clarifying the nature of participant reactive attitudes (§1.3).

To illustrate this, allow me to restate the three cases I raised in the introduction, as they will feature prominently throughout this work:

> **Lunar skepticism**: Walter is a college graduate in his mid-twenties who now works as a mid-level manager. In his spare time, Walter is an astronomy enthusiast. Recently, after watching a program on the history channel about the conspiracy behind the lunar landing, Walter has become an evangelist of sorts denying humans have ever landed on the moon.
>
> Emma is a five-year old, the daughter of one of Walter's good friends. Emma loves the air and space museum and is fascinated by the moon. Her parents read to her all about the moon including stories about the lunar landing. One day when Walter was over for dinner, he became enthusiastic about his newfound skepticism about the lunar landing and told Emma all about it. Now Emma tells everyone that the lunar landing never happened.
>
> **Train Schedule**: Raymond, an individual with savant syndrome, is extremely reliable at remembering and calculating hundreds of items at once. His brother Charlie relies on Raymond's memory of train tables for an extremely important meeting he must

[14] Fischer and Tognazzini, "Physiognomy," 385

get to. Unfortunately, Raymond gives Charlie the normal operating times; unaware that today is a holiday.[15]

Bipolar Belief: Thom suffers from bipolar disorder but has yet to be diagnosed. Paranoia presents in Thom's manic states. He has just had his first manic break and believes that his wife is cheating on him and begins to accuse her forcefully while hurling terrible insults at her.

These cases highlight the distinction between evaluability and accountability. The attitudes we have toward Emma and the judgments we direct at her are different in kind from those we have toward Walter. We might think Emma is being silly for telling others the lunar landing was fake, but we do not treat her as a full member in the epistemic community. Walter, on the other hand, we do treat as a full member. As such, we find his belief absurd or stupid. Walter is accountable for his belief (it's formation and maintenance) whereas Emma is not. Moreover, Emma is not accountable because she is not evaluable. In a similar way, Raymond is not accountable for his beliefs because neither accountability judgments nor participant reactive attitudes make sense when directed at him. Notice, the issue is not one of age since Raymond is a biological adult. Both Emma and Raymond lack some *capacities or abilities* that would render person-level evaluation apt. Lastly, Thom's mental illness temporarily undermines his evaluability; Thom is, in some sense, temporarily insane. We shall return to these cases throughout the rest of this work. For now, it is important to note that our actual practice of evaluating others epistemically has two dimensions (or faces).[16]

[15] Again, depending on how we fill in some details, Raymond may be excused or exempted. If Charlie incorrectly told Raymond that he needed normal operating times, then it seems that Raymond is excused. However, if Raymond was simply oblivious to this fact and Charlie did not incorrectly tell Raymond that it is normal operating hours, then it seems that Raymond is exempt. For my purposes, assume the latter. Thanks to Michael Williams for pointing out this ambiguity.

[16] See Fischer and Tognazzini, "Physiognomy," 385.

On the one hand, we often base responsibility judgments on whether and to what extent the individual behaved responsibly, i.e., behaved in such a way as to fulfill her doxastic or moral or practical obligations, broadly understood. Thus, sometimes one acts or believes responsibly or irresponsibly. On the other hand, when one fails to be responsible because one fails to be the appropriate target of responsibility ascriptions, in general, one is not therefore irresponsible; in such a case, one is non-responsible.[17] The distinction between evaluability and accountability corresponds to the sets of distinctions between responsibility/irresponsibility and responsibility/non-responsibility. There are several important features of this distinction that deserve some attention, but first let me state more formally just what the distinction is and offer some preliminary remarks about how we use these terms:

> **Accountability** (Responsible/Irresponsible): concerns the extent to which a subject has met or failed to meet normative requirements for belief or action and whether responsibility ascriptions—more generally, reactive attitudes—are in principle, or in fact, warranted in a particular case. Hence, a subject S is accountable for a belief that p iff (i) S has met (or failed to meet) normative requirements for believing p and (ii) ascribing responsibility to S for p is in principle, or in fact, warranted.

So accountability is focused on particular beliefs and particular evaluations. (We do also use accountability language in a more general way as well. I shall return to this shortly.) By contrast, evaluability is more general.

> **Evaluability** (Responsible/Non-Responsible): concerns whether normative requirements are apt for an individual and whether responsibility ascriptions make sense. Hence, a subject S is evaluable iff (i) normative requirements are apt for S, and

[17] Note that being non-responsible is not the same thing as not being responsible. In both cases, the individual would be exempt from responsibility judgments, but in the former the reason for exemption is that those judgments are inapt, in general. In the latter, the reason for exemption is that the individual did not do/believe what she is accused of doing/ believing. My thinking on this distinction is heavily in debt to countless conversations with Michael Williams and Fischer and Tognazzini's excellent paper.

(ii) responsibility ascriptions directed at S make sense.[18] Or, again, a subject S is evaluable iff S is the appropriate target of participant reactive attitudes.

In the introduction to this chapter, I presented the competence question as being concerned with the conditions under which an individual is subject to participant reactive attitudes. If the present distinction between accountability and evaluability is accurate, then an answer to the competence question will be an account of evaluability. To question whether an individual is accountable presupposes an answer as to whether she is subject to reactive attitudes; we could not meaningfully ask if she discharged her epistemic obligations if it would be inappropriate to suggest she has obligations. There are, however, putative reasons to question whether there is a distinction between evaluability and accountability or whether the concept of evaluability does duty for competence.

Part of the tendency to collapse accountability and evaluability arises, I think, from parsing the terms involved. For to maintain that one is accountable is to maintain that one can be held to (or able to give an) account. And what else could competence be other than being able to be held to (or able to give an) account? There is a related ambiguity with "competence" as well. Sometimes we use competence language to implicate responsibility in the accountability sense rather than in the evaluability sense. When the manager accuses her subordinate of being *in*competent she surely does not mean that reactive attitudes are inappropriately directed at the employee, but rather that the employee has fallen below a standard for which she bears accountability. None of these worries about usage of responsibility language is trivial so I need to address them.

First, my distinction between accountability and evaluability is largely, though not wholly, terminological. The ambiguity in "accountability" between the general sense of being able to

[18] I shall clarify enough for my purposes what is meant by the aptness of normative requirements in what follows.

be held to (or to give an) account and the more particular sense of being the warranted target of reactive attitudes for a particular (set of) belief(s) invites confusion. While the former is quite close to my use of "evaluability" above, it will keep things clearer if we use "accountability" to refer to warranted responsibility ascriptions or evaluations in particular cases and "evaluability" to refer to whether or not normative standards and reactive attitudes appropriately apply. The distinction is not wholly terminological, however. There is some (perhaps minuscule) analytical space between being an apt target of, e.g., responsibility ascriptions for a belief and being accountable for the belief. As **bi-polar belief** above illustrates, an individual might be appropriately targeted with reactive attitudes in general, even if those attitudes fail to apply in particular cases. And as we shall see below there are many ways to be excused or exempted from epistemic evaluation and not all of them undermine evaluability.

Second, the fact that we evaluate noncompetent beings (even rightly) does not entail that competence and evaluability, in my sense, come apart. The kind of evaluability I am interested in is *reactive* evaluability. So, it does not concern merely being able to be evaluated, but rather to be evaluated as a participant member of an epistemic community. The ways we evaluate others based on their beliefs falls on a continuum. On one end, we might evaluate, in particular ways, certain kinds of animals each of which fail to be subject to any kind of reactive attitudes; animals are not participants in epistemic practices and thus are not subject to the norms and standards that govern those practices. On the other end, we evaluate mature human knowers for their beliefs (including the acquisition and maintenance of belief). Along the continuum are children who are treated as initiates[19] into social epistemic

[19] See Williams, M. "Normative Naturalism,' *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18 No. 3 (2010): 355-375 and "Master and Novice in the Later Wittgenstein," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 48 No. 2 (2011): 199-

practices—individuals with whom we use participant reactive attitude language for the purpose of training and guiding—teenagers who are perhaps minimally competent in some ways but still not fully competent knowers—individuals at whom we appropriately direct some reactive attitudes but not yet others—and mature human knowers.

Finally, the fact that we often use competence language to implicate accountability does not undermine the fact that we use competence language in a more general sense as well. This is true especially in cases of mental aptitude. In some cases, before suspects can be tried for a crime they must be deemed competent. The purpose is to determine whether they have the mental facility to understand both what is happening around them when on trial (to participate in their defense) as well as what they did. Absent this, the trial is postponed until such time as they become competent or the charges are dropped according to the law. As I mentioned in the introduction, the sense of competence I have in mind is close to this legal sense of basic mental aptitude. To say that an individual is epistemically evaluable—epistemically competent—is to say that she has met the requirements to participate in normative epistemic practices like providing reasons for belief when challenged, recognizing whether a piece of evidence is relevant, assessing her reasons to believe something, etc. If an individual has not yet developed (or through some tragic event loses) such basic capacities and abilities, she is not evaluable. We would not say she is *in*competent, but rather that she is not (yet) competent or no longer competent. In practice, however, one's basic competence is often displayed in an individual's competenc*ies*—skills and abilities.

We often settle the question of basic competence by playing witness to an individual manifesting or exercising her capacities or abilities with proficiency. This is yet another reason why we can easily miss the point I am making in this section, viz., that accountability

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211 for a discussion about language use and concept acquisition in children. She focuses on the master/novice relationship between mature adult speakers and knowers and children as initiate learners.

is distinct from evaluability. Since one's basic competence—implicating evaluability—does not easily peel off from one's competency—implicating accountability—the confusion over evaluability and accountability is readily understandable. Nevertheless, I have shown there is a distinction to be made and I shall argue that paying due attention to it provides resources for understanding and explaining important phenomena (e.g., pervasive intuitions about the role of control and awareness in epistemic evaluation).

Apart from this use of "competence" in a general sense, we use it to indicate we have met base requirements in specific domains. When we claim competence at some task or in some field, we indicate we have met conditions such that we are open to being evaluated based on that task or in that field. To avoid these confusions, going forward, I shall use "accountability" and "evaluability" as defined above. Moreover, since to meet the base requirements for competence is to be the appropriate subject of participant reactive attitudes, competence just is evaluability. So, the task of this work is to provide an account of the conditions of evaluability and in so doing an account of epistemic competence.

Thus far, I have discussed evaluability and accountability by reference to responsibility ascriptions, but situating the discussion within the domain of responsibility unduly constrains it. Just as it is perfectly reasonable to wonder whether, for example, virtue concepts appropriately apply to an individual, it is perfectly reasonable to question whether virtue concepts are warranted when ascribed to that individual in a particular case. As such, we should rather think of evaluability and accountability as implicating not just responsibility ascriptions, but as implicating broadly positive and negative participant or reactive evaluation. For example, was the subject just/unjust in their action, stupid/intelligent in their belief, and so on. There is no clear way to reword the contrasts that implicate competence—responsible/non-responsible—that includes the rich landscape of our evaluations since such

evaluations may be inapt because the individual is not competent or because she simply did not do what she is accused of doing. While it is acceptable to ask whether an individual was careful or careless in their belief formation (thus implicating accountability), to ask whether the individual was careful or non-careful is unacceptable. Instead, it makes sense to ask if ascriptions (positive and negative) even make sense. To illustrate, when we instruct young children to think carefully, e.g., when playing a memory game, we do not hold them to account when they fail to do so. The reason why is that they are in the process of learning how to think carefully and it is not until they have this ability that genuinely calling their thinking careless is appropriate. What's more, any evaluative language we seem to be using is pedagogical in nature; to say to a young child he should know better does not imply any genuine disapproval, but rather provides tacit apprentice-like instruction for the child to learn how to know better.[20]

Including other kinds of epistemic evaluation and recognizing that not all utterances of evaluative terms imply genuine participant evaluation more accurately represents the various ways we target individuals with epistemic reactive attitudes and makes salient the fact that our practices are quite nuanced. Moreover, one's context and interests will play a non-trivial role in whether an individual is aptly targeted with epistemic reactive attitudes. Hence, when attempting to articulate conditions of epistemic competence we should not expect a hard and fast line between noncompetent and competent knowers. Indeed, since I shall argue that competence is constituted by the possession of certain cognitive abilities and since individuals have varied levels of proficiency in manifesting or exercising their abilities, it should come as no surprise that no hard line exists. The peripheral cases may never be settled wholly satisfactorily. Nor should we want peripheral cases to dictate the direction an

[20] Cf. Williams, "Master and Novice."

inquiry into epistemic competence should go. By focusing on the clear cases, we circumscribe an account of epistemic competence to understanding our actual practice of evaluating others; what good would it do for us to provide an account of evaluability for cases whose probability of occurring are infinitesimally small? This is not to say that we cannot provide an account of epistemic competence, however. It is only to say that in some (perhaps many) cases determining whether the conditions for competence have been met will not be without some controversy. Nevertheless, we are now in a better position to highlight important features and relations of evaluability (competence) and accountability.

a. Features of epistemic competence

We have seen that there is a meaningful distinction between evaluability and accountability. I want briefly to discuss some important features of the two concepts. The competence question—under what conditions is an individual the appropriate target of participant reactive attitudes?—is distinct from the accountability question—under what conditions are we justified/warranted in targeting an individual with participant reactive attitudes for a particular (set of) belief(s)? As I suggested, an answer to the accountability question presupposes an answer to the competence question. We cannot meaningfully ask whether anyone is justified in, say, holding someone responsible for a belief if we have not at least tacitly settled whether responsibility ascriptions even apply to that individual. Consider an analogy to moral responsibility.[21] One might argue that psychopaths are not accountable for their actions because they are unable to recognize and be moved by moral reasons. As such,

[21] Fischer and Tognazzini, "Physiognomy" make a similar analogy but use it to illustrate how one might be subject to arateic attributability but not to reactive attributability. This distinction is not as important to the present work so I set it to the side.

the kinds of attitudes we typically direct at normal non-psychopathic individuals are inappropriate when directed at psychopaths. (To be sure, we remove the psychopath from society because she is dangerous. But this is a far cry from holding her responsible.) So the first important point to note is that accountability presupposes evaluability. To put the point differently, accountability judgments and attitudes are (partially) grounded in evaluability; a reactive attitude directed at an individual for a belief they hold cannot be warranted unless such reactive attitudes are appropriate in general.

Next, there is a set of distinctions that correspond to those implicated in the distinction between accountability and evaluability. Specifically, just as an individual might be responsible/irresponsible or responsible/non-responsible, an individual might be rational/irrational or rational/non-rational (a-rational). A young child is neither rational nor irrational: she is non-rational. More accurately, she is *not yet* rational since her lack of rationality is merely temporal unlike, say, a dog's lack of rationality. Assuming there is no severe form of developmental impairment, young children become (at least minimally) rational creatures. Similarly, assuming there is no severe form of developmental impairment, young children become competent believers and knowers. Whether the difference between accountability/evaluability and rationality/ (ir/a-)rationality is merely terminological or whether both sets of distinctions refer to the same phenomena is not important for my purposes; pursuing that line of inquiry would take us too far afield. It is enough to recognize that our practice of evaluating others based on their beliefs presupposes we have met basic standards of rationality or evaluability and this shows up in the ways we have modified terms to bring out subtle but substantial differences—the prefixes, ir, a-, non-, in-, and so on each mark such differences. This leads us to our third feature. An individual believes or acts

responsibly just in case she meets some normative requirement on belief or action, but whether she meets this presupposes that such requirements are apt.

Fourth, evaluability turns on features of the subject apart from what they did and did not do. One way to think about this is that there must be something about the subject that makes her competent (perhaps she has measure of, or the right kind of, control over her belief forming capacities or actions; perhaps she is responsive to reasons, perhaps she is aware of the relevant norms, and so on). On the other hand, sometimes accountability turns on features of the subject (e.g., when she has cultivated a certain kind of character and it is the character that now renders her accountable), sometimes on something the subject did (e.g., deliberately ignored contradictory evidence), and sometimes on something the subject failed to do (e.g., weigh evidence appropriately, fact-check, consider the implications of an action, etc.). Whether normative standards are apt is determined by features of the agent, most notably whether the agent has the ability to meet those standards. But, whether she has met those standards is often determined using those capacities.[22] Again, we tacitly settle the competence question in our actual practice of evaluating individuals based on their manifestation or exercise of capacities and abilities.

Finally, the issue of accountability versus evaluability is fundamentally an issue of whether an individual is in the space of reasons or whether a certain region within the space of reasons is open to that individual. Non-competent individuals are non-responsible—non-evaluable—because they fail to be in the space of reasons, either locally or globally, temporarily or permanently. Accountability is a matter of determining an individual's

[22] Difficulties arise in specifying the necessary capacities and in demarcating the possession versus the use of those capacities. What counts as using a capacity? Further, do we not think responsibility ascriptions appropriate in cases where the relevant capacity failed to function (the psychological equivalent of omissions)? Chapters, 3 5, and 6 address these issues.

"location" in the space of reasons and evaluability is a matter of determining whether an individual is in the (or a) space of reasons at all.

These brief remarks are meant to shore up the idea that there is a meaningful and useful distinction between accountability and evaluability. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on just the notion of epistemic evaluability—i.e., competence—and its importance. Specifically, in the remainder of this section I clarify the meaning of being subject to reactive attitudes. In the subsequent sections I indirectly home in on the concept of competence by way of a brief discussion of exemption and excuse.

b. Epistemic reactive attitudes

Openness to evaluation/being the appropriate target of evaluation/being rationally accessible to attitudes are different ways of saying that one has met the base conditions for epistemic competence according my characterization in §1.1. As such, to articulate and defend an account of epistemic competence, I need to present a sufficiently clear idea of what it means to be open to evaluation. I shall have gone a long way towards that if I first delineate the kinds of evaluations to which a subject must be open. Following Strawson,[23] I submit the evaluations that matter for competence are participant reactive attitudes.

The kinds of evaluation(s) we are interested in when dealing with whether an individual is evaluable are the kinds that treat the subject as involved in her belief formation; it is something about the subject herself (and not just a system or process hosted in that subject) that explains why she believes thusly and also makes it appropriate to use those beliefs in an

[23] Strawson, P.F. "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 1-25 reprinted in Watson, G. *Free Will.* (New York: Oxford University Press 2011).

evaluation of her. They are not the kinds of evaluations we use when we treat others merely as belief-forming systems—e.g., the kinds we use in determining whether a faculty or capacity is functioning properly, or the kinds we use when we attempt to understand how a particular (set of) process(es) work(s).

Strawson's work on moral responsibility provides a helpful way of thinking about the distinction between these two kinds of evaluation as between objective and participant attitudes.[24] When we treat others objectively, we treat them, "perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject … to be managed or handled or cured or trained … though [we] may talk with [them], even negotiate with [them], [we] cannot reason with [them] … [we] can at most pretend … to reason"[25] with them. There is a kind of evaluation of an individual or of their beliefs that is objective in this way, but this is not the kind relevant to epistemic competence. To evaluate a subject in this way is to treat them as an object or a system that has beliefs as opposed to evaluating them in such a way as to treat them as a believer. When we treat a subject as a believer, by contrast, we see them as the locus of evaluation; we treat the subject, and not the system, as an object of approbation or disapprobation, praise or blame, etc. In this way, we treat the believer as participating in epistemic practices. And as participant, we treat them as capable of recognizing norms, assessing their beliefs and belief-forming practices, and revising their beliefs and practices accordingly. It is evaluations of these kinds an individual is open to when an individual is evaluable in the sense that implicates epistemic competence. Thus, in asking under what conditions is an individual epistemically competent, we are asking whether she is subject to the attitudes and judgments that treat her as a

[24] See Strawson, P.F. "Freedom" for more on the distinction between participant reactive attitudes and objective reactive attitudes. I am interested in a more general sense of assessment of which reactive attitudes are but one part. Some of the attitudes we have towards others' beliefs are similar to or identical with what Strawson has in mind, e.g., my resentment at your belief that I am untrustworthy. But, there are other attitudes and judgments we deploy in our responsibility ascriptions in the doxastic realm, e.g., whether your belief is proportioned to the evidence, whether it is true, whether it is rational, etc.
[25] Strawson, "Freedom," 79.

member (either sufficiently or fully) of the epistemic community. Let us call such evaluations and judgments epistemic reactive attitudes.

The kinds of evaluations that imply epistemic competence are the kinds involved in being the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes, the kinds that imply an individual is not exempt from epistemic evaluation. And, the kind of evaluability relevant to epistemic competence is reactive or participant evaluability. (On a related note, epistemic competence likewise implies openness to questions and challenges. In particular, epistemically competent subjects can reasonably be expected to answer, "how do you know?" and "why do you think that?" kinds of questions.)[26] When an individual fails to be open to reactive attitudes, then she is not irresponsible, but non-responsible.

1.2. Exemption and Excuse

The notion of competence might further be elucidated indirectly by thinking about exemption and excuse. Excusing conditions "cancel or qualify the appearance of noncompliance with the basic demand,"[27] and exempting conditions "show that the agent, temporarily or permanently, globally or locally, is appropriately exempted from the basic demand in the first place."[28] An individual can be exempt in different ways, including by being noncompetent. So we can indirectly get at competence by carving off the ways an individual can be exempt from evaluation apart from failing to be subject to epistemic

[26] See Williams, *Problems of Knowledge*, Ch. 13.
[27] Watson, "Limits of Evil," 122.
[28] Watson, "Limits of Evil," *ibid.*

reactive attitudes, in general. Most obviously, an individual is exempt if she does not believe what she is accused of believing. If I overhear someone saying hateful, racist things, but then find out she is just practicing for an audition later that day, any judgments or attitudes I directed at her for being racist miss the mark. She does not believe what I thought she did and so is exempt.[29]

A different way in which a subject may be exempt from evaluation arises when there is merely a causal connection between the belief and the person. In this case, it is doubtful whether the person has a belief at all, as opposed to a mere response to a stimulus; a doxastic analog to a knee-jerk reflex. But suppose there are beliefs that are merely causal, whatever else these are, they are surely not the kinds of beliefs we are interested in when we evaluate someone based on their belief(s). At best, these kinds of beliefs help us determine if a cognitive system is functioning properly. For example, being able to read the bottom line of random letters at the optometrist, or being able to distinguish a "d" from a "b", and so on. The point is that these kinds of evaluations are not directed at the person, but rather at various systems or faculties hosted in the person.

Strawson famously suggested several other examples of exempting conditions: being psychotic, sociopathic, a child, under great strain, hypnotized, or being unfortunate in formative circumstances.[30] In each of these examples, the actions or beliefs of the individual do not result from the individual's agency (either moral or epistemic). In the first three, the individual lacks moral agency (and epistemic agency in the case of the child). Since psychopaths and sociopaths cannot be motivated by moral reasons, their actions are not the

[29] I might either absolve her rather than treat her as exempt or I might also evaluate her based on her action, viz. uttering racist things. It is one thing to believe X and another to assert it. Here, my judgment misses the mark not because she is exempt—she did really utter those things—but because she is excused. The racist terms were not directed at anybody.
[30] Strawson, "Freedom."

result of moral decision-making. But, being subject to moral evaluation requires (at least) that one has the capacity to be moved by moral considerations. Hence, they lack moral agency and are therefore not subject to relevant reactive attitudes. The final three examples suggest circumstances that undermine one's agency in important ways. If a person does (believes) something due to being hypnotized, her action (belief) is not the result of her acting for reasons (or recognizing reasons that justify her belief), but instead the result of the hypnosis. When asking whether an individual is responsible in the sense that implies competence in epistemic matters we are not asking whether they actually have the belief (as in the actor running racist lines) and we are not asking whether there is a belief—or perhaps, a belief-like state[31]—in them (as in mere causal responsibility), rather we are asking whether in believing as they do they are open to epistemic evaluation.[32]

An essential feature of what I am calling openness to appraisal or evaluation is that the subject must be rationally accessible to certain kinds of attitudes[33]—that certain attitudes make sense or are reasonable when directed at that individual—in general. This becomes more apparent when we consider situations in which our attitudes toward the subject are affected by further information.[34] In some such cases we exempt or excuse the subject from

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[31] I take it that sometimes when a subject actually has a belief they are open to assessment, but that epistemic subjects with belief-like states are not open to assessment. These might be mere thoughts or fancies, intuitions, etc. but they do not become beliefs until further conditions are met. For present purposes, we may say that a person has a belief just in case she has a propositional attitude caused by a cognitive faculty that she—in a sense to be articulated in chapter in five—owns. This recognition of her capacities makes the propositional attitude usable in an evaluation of her.

[32] See Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes;" Fischer and Ravizza, *Perspectives*, Ch 1; and Scanlon, Thomas. *What We Owe to Each Other.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[33] Bennett, Jonathan. "Why Is Belief Involuntary?" *Analysis* 50, no. 2 (1990): 87–107; Fischer, J. M. *My Way: Essays on Moral Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Strawson, "Freedom"; Watson, G. "Two Faces of Responsibility." *Philosophical Topics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 227–248.

[34] Some discussions of this idea are muddled by terminological differences. Bennet, "Why is Belief Involuntary?" speaks of accountability; Watson, "Two Faces" wants to distinguish attributability from accountability; Strawson, P., "Freedom" thinks of these matters in terms of what we actually do in practice. Watson, G. "Free Action and Free Will." *Mind* 96, no. 382 (1987): 145–172, "Two Faces" and Fischer and Ravizza, *Perspectives,* want to keep central importance on the reactive attitudes, but allow for what responsibility is in terms of what attitudes it is appropriate to have and not just what attitudes we do have.

those attitudes. Exempting conditions in some way undermine the subject's agency, wholly or partially. To illustrate, let us return to the realm of action.

> One night, Thea is out with her friends, she decides to drink some wine and drive home. Her judgment is impaired and as a result, while driving under the influence, she is in a serious accident and the driver in the other car is seriously but not fatally injured.

In reading this case, one is likely to have attitudes towards Thea: disgust and anger, for example. One is also likely to evaluate her in various ways: she was reckless, foolish, selfish, blameworthy, etc. But filling out the details of the case changes those attitudes and evaluations.

> Thea has never done drugs or had more than a drink or two when she goes out with her friends precisely because she always wants full control of her faculties. One night, she orders a single glass of wine and proceeds to drink it over the course of an hour over dinner. Unbeknownst to her, the drink is laced with a very powerful drug. As a result, Thea's judgment is seriously impaired and she decides to drive home. Unfortunately, while driving under the influence she is in an accident and the driver in the other car is seriously but not fatally injured.

In this case, Thea's actions are not attributable to *her*. Our attitudes of disgust and anger dissipate; we see Thea as victim and not as culprit. Notice that (i) Thea is an agent and (ii) not only is she not accountable for her actions after drinking the drug-laced wine, but also the actions fail even to be attributable to her. In being under the influence of the drug, Thea's agency is undermined. Put differently, we would not say Thea is excused from responsibility, rather, we would say she is exempt. (Or, perhaps we may say she is absolved.) Questions of accountability cannot sensibly be raised when it is inappropriate to target a subject with various attitudes. The same would hold in the epistemic case as well.

Now in some cases, while we are not exempt from evaluation for our actions and/or beliefs, we may nevertheless fail to be (fully) accountable. That is to say, in some cases our

actions and/or beliefs may be excused. The appearance of responsibility and the subsequent attitudes and evaluations directed at us miss the mark not because those attitudes do not make sense—are not aptly attributed to us—but rather they miss the mark because of apparent (or even unapparent) mitigating or absolving factors; something else explains why we did what we did or believed what we believed.[35] In some cases, it is not quite clear whether the person is excused or exempt since it is not clear whether factors merely mitigate or absolve or whether those factors undermine the general applicability of reactive attitudes in the circumstances; our lack of a purely objective perspective tends to result in situations that call for defeasible evaluations. I mention the possibility of excusing conditions to contrast evaluability and accountability.

If the question concerns whether there are mitigating factors that lessen or alter which attitudes and judgments we are warranted in having toward someone, then we are dealing with excuses. If, on the other hand, the question concerns whether the individual herself is the appropriate target of evaluation, then we are dealing with exemption. There is not necessarily a sharp dividing line; context will play a significant role. In the example of Thea above, we might think she is excused because something (namely, the powerful drug) undermines her awareness of what she does and therefore mitigates her responsibility. Or, we might think that she is absolved—i.e., fully excused—from any negative evaluations. But we might think that, in a deep way, Thea was not herself when she drove and this is not due to conscious choice to undermine her ability to make good choices (i.e., not the result of her choice to get drunk by consciously drinking a lot). Hence, Thea is exempt from responsibility attitudes and judgments. The upshot is, if we are concerned whether a subject

[35] See , John L. "A Plea for Excuses." In *Essays in Philosophical Psychology*, (1964): 1–29. Reprinted in Austin, J L. *Philosophical Papers* (3rd ed.), eds., J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), for an excellent discussion of excuses and exemption.

is fully responsible—whether evaluations fully apply—we have already settled (at least tacitly) the competence question. There can be no accountability without competence.

I have suggested that being exempt from evaluation entails that those evaluations are inapt in one of three main ways: (1) the subject did not do/believe what she is accused of,[36] (2) the action/belief is merely causally connected to the subject, and (3) the subject is not the appropriate target of evaluation, in general. The sense of exemption of interest to me is (3). Thus, understanding how and why individuals are exempt from evaluation in this way will provide answers as to how and why individuals can be open to appraisal.

To sum up all that has been said thus far, there are at least two senses of responsibility that we might be interested in: one that implies basic normative competence and one that concerns whether and which particular kinds of evaluation are warranted in particular cases.[37] The former sets conditions the satisfaction of which opens us up to particular evaluation. Insofar as we are interested in the evaluation of others, we should be interested in this sense of responsibility. This is one motivation for thinking about general normative competence, or, as in the present work, epistemic competence. There is another motivation for thinking about this sense of responsibility intimated in the relationship between evaluability and accountability, and the interest in doxastic responsibility.

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[36] This is too simplistic. As I shall argue in chapter three, we are often evaluated based on beliefs that we do not have, but should or based on beliefs that we do have, but should not have even if we are unaware of it. These doxastic omissions and the aptness of evaluation based on them does not undermine the point I am making here, however. In the case of doxastic omissions there is normative failure that explains the appropriateness of evaluation. In the case of absent belief omissions that imply exemption, the failure is not in meeting relevant standards but rather in failure to believe *simpliciter*.

[37] One might suggest that these are not two senses of responsibility, but two questions that need to be answered to determine whether any particular reactive attitude is justified, and thus one is responsible (in one sense). However, I think we use responsibility in these two senses. For example, when a boss calls her employees together and asks, "who is responsible for the mess in the break room?" She is asking who the mess is attributable to. Only after that is settled, can questions about accountability sensibly be raised. Once the mess is attributable to Jerry, the boss can inquire whether Jerry has any excuse for making the mess. Thanks to Hilary Bok for raising this point.

1.3. The Importance of the Competence Question

We have seen that epistemic responsibility is a pervasive feature of our lives. Many philosophers have picked up on this and have closely tied it with the justification we have for our beliefs. Indeed, it is one of the central contentions among internalist and externalist conceptions of justification. Here is a representative sample of the role of responsibility according to prominent epistemologists:

> One way, then, of reexpressing the locution 'p is more reasonable than q for S at t' is to say this: S is so situated at t that his intellectual requirement, his *responsibility* as an intellectual being, is better fulfilled by p than by q.[38]
>
> My contention here is that the idea of avoiding … irresponsibility, of being epistemically *responsible* in one's believings, is the core of the notion of epistemic justification.[39]
>
> S is justified in believing that *p* at *t* if and only if it is epistemically *responsible* of (or permissible for) S to believe that *p* at *t*.[40]
>
> It is not surprising that we should be interested in epistemic *responsibility*. Epistemic *responsibility* is an important aspect of rationality. It is important because our methods for forming beliefs go beyond the fixed cognitive equipment that animals are restricted to. Our beliefs can be made articulate and (we hope) improved. Trying to be epistemically *responsible* is the means to such improvement.[41]

Responsibility is here tied up with doxastic justification, whether one is justified *in* believing a proposition that p. This sense of responsibility is what I have called accountability and we have seen that accountability presupposes evaluability. In evaluating an epistemic agent for her belief much is already settled: whether the agent is an appropriate target of certain kinds

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[38] Chisholm, R. M. *Theory of Knowledge.* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall 1977): 14.
[39] Bonjour, L. *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 8.
[40] Steup, M. *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 135.
[41] Williams, M. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. (Oxford University Press Oxford, 2001.)34

of attitudes or appraisals, whether (we think) what she believes is true or false and whether she has some justification for the belief. Evaluability revolves around being the kind of thing that is or could be subject to epistemic reactive attitudes, while accountability revolves around the kind and degree to which one is warranted in holding an epistemic subject accountable for what she believes in a particular case. I have argued that to be accountable one must first be the appropriate target of evaluation—one must be epistemically competent. General theoretical interest in epistemic accountability motivates an investigation into the preconditions of that accountability.

We may wonder, though, why thinking about evaluability is in any way fruitful. After all, we are actually quite sophisticated in doling out accountability in everyday practices. To put the point a bit differently, even if I am right in thinking that evaluability is presupposed in accountability, what reason do we have to present an account of evaluability when we are already very good at determining whether reactive attitudes are appropriate (at least in practice)? Should we not simply focus on accountability and leave it at that level? And, do we not already have a good enough theory about evaluability, i.e., good enough to ground accountability judgments? Answers to these questions become clearer once we try to articulate some marks of a pre-theoretic account of evaluability. In doing so, I am merely attempting to bring out plausible features of openness to evaluation. As we shall see, while these features are quite plausible, the difficulties they present entail a need for deeper theoretical explanation. I shall focus on responsibility ascriptions, but these remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to other reactive attitudes as well.

When we hold someone accountable for an action (belief), we think of them as being able to take responsibility—to be able to say or think of themselves as responsible. Implied in this is that we think the individual was in some sense aware of what they were doing or

believing—though complications arise with cases of culpable omissions—that they have a sufficient degree of understanding concerning what they did (not) do (believe), and that perhaps that they made a choice that resulted in their action (belief).

There is a lot here that needs cleaning up. First, the idea of taking responsibility as being able to say or think of oneself as responsible is ambiguous between actually saying or thinking of oneself thusly and it being appropriate to think of oneself thusly. The former implies that children, exempt from responsibility, might be responsible since they can say or think of themselves as responsible. The latter begs the question since the appropriateness of responsibility ascriptions is the point at issue. Perhaps, what is meant is that when an individual thinks of himself as responsible he has a certain kind of awareness. There are more or less vacuous ways of understanding awareness. Pretty obviously, a person must be aware of themselves in some capacity to take responsibility, but it cannot be merely that they are aware of themselves in general. Rather, it seems as if someone must be aware (or, at least, capable of being aware) of relevant features of the act or belief that matters. This seems to be closer to what is needed. However, now the difficulty is understanding how awareness can play a role in culpable omissions. In speaking about the role of awareness in responsibility for action, George Sher nicely captures the point:

> When an agent should, but does not, recognize that he is acting wrongly or foolishly—when he fails to respond to the beliefs or aspects of his situation that constitute his evidence—his failure cannot by itself render him responsible because it is a mere *nonevent* that involves no positive facts about him. This remains true even if the resulting lack of awareness causes him to fall below some applicable standard (my emphasis).[42]

What we need is some way of connecting the agent with the failure to believe (act) that explains why she is responsible. For example, suppose Janet watches the documentary

[42] Sher, George. *Who Knew?: Responsibility without Awareness*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 85-6.

Blackfish and due to her love of Sea World is unable to view the film objectively. She is unmoved by the arguments of the film but she thinks she is an impartial viewer. After watching the film, she begins to tell all her friends that the film is unbalanced, presents false information, and that Sea World would never do anything to lessen the quality of life for its cetaceans. She has failed to meet relevant standards of belief formation, but is wholly unaware that she has. In this case, what grounds the responsibility judgment we may direct towards Janet is not her taking responsibility or her awareness. We need a way of thinking about Janet's epistemic responsibility that explains why she is at fault even if she is unaware of her failure to meet relevant standards. (The problem of omissions notwithstanding, we must not overlook the fact that were Janet literally incapable of recognizing the norms she violates—i.e., were those norms brought to her attention or perhaps were she to flout similar norms in a less emotionally charged situation she would still not recognize or be motivated by them—then she would not be the apt target of responsibility ascriptions.) There is a tension between needing a general awareness of norms and standards that govern action and belief (acquisition), not to mention the understanding of when and how those norms apply, and requiring awareness for each particular act (belief). An account of evaluability must address this or the justification we have in ascribing responsibility in these cases is in jeopardy.

Another intuitive mark of responsibility is that an individual must understand what they are doing (believing). Since understanding is dispositional, the issue of culpable omissions does not affect the role of understanding in responsibility. However, there is a question about the object of understanding. When someone is responsible for, say, an action, what must they understand? Intuitively, if someone does not understand the thing they are doing, there is a strong case to be made that they are exempt from responsibility. The young child

who mistakenly shoots his mother with the gun he found in her purse arguably does not understand that he just shot his mother. At least, he does not sufficiently understand what he just did. However, it is not just the content of the action that responsible individuals must understand, rather, an individual must understand more general norms. Recall Janet's bias towards Sea World. If Janet were wholly incapable of recognizing the fact that bias is epistemically pernicious, she would be exempt from doxastic responsibility in those cases.

Understanding norms that govern belief and action are preconditions for understanding how they apply in particular cases. So if responsibility, in the accountability sense, presupposes that one understand norms and accountability presupposes evaluability, then it is likely that understanding norms is a part of evaluability. The point is that investigation into epistemic competence has potential for illuminating nearby concepts of theoretical interest. We have seen this with the discussion of exemption in the previous section and the remarks on awareness in this section. The same reasoning applies to understanding norms and perhaps even norm recognition.

The final mark of responsibility I want briefly to discuss in this section is choice. When someone is responsible we often think that they made a choice (or choices) that led to or brought about that action (belief). We often use choice language to excuse or exempt from accountability: "she couldn't help it;" "If it was up to me I would X, but I have no choice in the matter." Phrases like these are quite common in our evaluations of others. They signify a distancing between the individual and the act (belief). The thought seems to be that since I did not choose to act in this way, then this action cannot be mine. And, if the action cannot be mine, then I am not evaluable based upon it.

The concept of choice raises a problem for the unreflective way we ascribe responsibility. While we do often exculpate ourselves by highlighting the lack of choice, we

also quite often hold people accountable for things they could not help doing (believing). What this suggests is that there are requirements—preconditions—on responsibility that must explain how, why, and when lack of choice matters for warranted evaluation. Moreover, if we can be responsible for things over which we lack choice, we must explain this as well. These final points along with each of the marks of responsibility discussed above bring to light two central themes of responsibility: ownership and control. Since these concepts will feature more prominently in the rest of this work, I want to take a little more time discussing them.

1.4. Ownership and Control

We have before us a concept that implies the appropriateness of epistemic assessment, viz., reactive evaluability. I have argued that we ought to understand this as constituting epistemic competence and that presenting an account of it is the central purpose of this dissertation. The question, "under what conditions are we epistemically competent?" is answered by providing an account of the conditions of reactive evaluability. I have argued that this is interesting in its own right and that, given the general epistemological focus on responsibility, it ought to be of serious interest to epistemologists, more generally. When we begin to examine our practice of evaluating others based on their beliefs (actions), we start to see that the preconditions of evaluation must explain how we can be assessed for beliefs we are unaware we should (not) have as well as how we can be assessed for beliefs over which we have no choice. In this section, I shall discuss two concepts related to these issues. Warranted

evaluation based on beliefs an individual is unaware she should have suggests that there is something about *her* that explains how we can be warranted in evaluating her. It suggests a kind of relation or connection to the belief (or lack thereof). Now, whatever explains this relation or connection must be something that the individual owns in such way that it explains how such evaluations can be warranted. The notion of choice suggests a kind of control.

a. Ownership

Implicit in the idea that one is open to evaluation is the notion of ownership. Some beliefs we have are in some sense alien to us; they do not fit in with the rest of what we believe. Sometimes these alien beliefs come to us out of the blue and sometimes these kinds of beliefs are uncovered. In the former case, some of these beliefs are not (and in some cases, could not be) integrated with our other beliefs. In the latter case, we often modify or repudiate them. In modifying them, we come to own them; they become indicative of our values, our intelligence (or ignorance), our goals, and abilities. It is only then that we open ourselves up to evaluation based on them.

It would make no sense (or at least be unjustifiably uncharitable) to evaluate someone based on an alien belief that could not be integrated with one's other beliefs. If brainwashing causes Jerry to see a certain political figure as an enemy after a triggering phrase, we would not be warranted in holding Jerry accountable for that belief; it is not indicative of him, his values, intelligence, goals, or abilities. Such beliefs are not connected or related to those who have them in the right kind of way. Therefore, we need some way of connecting the believer

to the beliefs (or, in the case of omissions, of connecting the believer to the lack of belief—of explaining why in failing to believe what they should they are nevertheless evaluable for that failure). Perhaps there is a sense of ownership that could plausibly play that role. But, it is one thing to say that responsibility requires that our beliefs be *ours*, it is quite another to articulate what this means.

There are several questions that need to be addressed. What sense of ownership is the right one? It is not just that someone owns a belief, but that she owns it in the right kind of way. Presumably, there is a sense in which the belief about the political figure is Jerry's belief. It is, after all, hosted in Jerry rather than Jerry's friend Seth. But, in another sense, it is not Jerry's belief since it is not indicative of his values, etc. So, what conditions do we need to meet in order to own a belief or a set of beliefs in the appropriate way? What is it that we own when we have fulfilled the ownership requirement for responsibility? Do we own discrete states or do we own the faculties and capacities that produce those states? Minimally, it seems that owning a belief requires that one is or could be aware of it, but this not sufficient. Recall **bi-polar belief** above. It seems that Thom is aware of the belief, but yet not responsible for it. Plausibly, this is because in a sense relevant to responsibility it is not *his* belief; it is not indicative of the beliefs he has and the values he holds in his non-manic states. So, in addition to being aware of the belief (or capable of being aware of it), something else must be true of an individual to explain belief ownership. There is much that needs to be filled out here and we shall come to it in due course,[43] but for now let me make two brief comments.

First, above I suggested that when alien beliefs are uncovered they become modified or get rejected. This also happens quite organically with a lot of other beliefs that are not alien.

[43] See chapter three for a discussion about awareness and chapter five for my account of ownership as cognitive ability ownership.

For instance, we have a lot of beliefs before we can justify, modify, or endorse them.[44] Many beliefs, including beliefs by young children, have a default entitlement that may be challenged later,[45] perhaps when we become competent knowers. In other words, we have very many beliefs before we are able to support them. The practice of giving reasons in support of our beliefs indicates our endorsement and ownership of them. Note that giving reasons, revising, and endorsing beliefs requires some minimal understanding of norms and standards. This suggests that ownership of beliefs requires awareness and understanding of norms that govern belief formation. It further suggests that one has the ability to recognize those norms and assess the reasons for the belief being questioned.

Second, we do not want our conditions to be so strict that almost no one meets them. So, the ownership condition for responsibility must not be understood as a conscious or reflective taking of ownership. Instead, we should seek to understand ownership in terms of tacit commitments. In owning a belief, we are on display; our values, goals, intentions, etc., are reflected in the beliefs we own.[46] Stating the ownership of belief this way, places me in the "attributionist"[47] camp of responsibility.[48] According to the attributionist "the fundamental question of responsibility [is] a question about the conditions of … attributability, that is to say, the conditions under which something can be attributed to a

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[44] Lehrer's Truetemp is a great example here. He finds himself with beliefs about the ambient temperature, but does not know why. These alien beliefs can later become endorsed by Truetemp if is checks them enough times to recognize that he is reliable in such beliefs. In doing so, his tempucomp becomes a cognitive ability that he can manifest. See Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*.

[45] See Williams, *Problems,* especially chapter 13 for discussion about default entitlements.

[46] This is true even if, as I indicated above, the best way to understand ownership of belief is derivative of belief-forming capacities. The capacities that we form and subsequently own are not simply the faculties of belief-formation (i.e., the biological subpersonal processes that all normally functioning human beings have), but also the capacities we develop because of our interests and commitments. For example, my dispositions to recall inane details of science fiction movies and shows form a capacity that tends to store such information. In debating with friends about the particulars of a film, my interests and values are on display in my ownership of that capacity manifest in my assertions and avowals.

[47] The terms "attributionism" and "volitionism" are from Levy, Neil. "Restoring Control."

[48] To be clear, I am only suggesting an attributionist theory of responsibility and evaluability for *belief*. I remain silent on the question of attributionism for action.

person in the way that is required for it to be a basis for … appraisal of that person."[49] We might think that evaluability as I have characterized it is not therefore a *kind* of responsibility, but is instead a precondition of it. There is surely something to this idea, but I have argued that our uses of "responsibility" implicate both the concept of accountability and the concept of evaluability.[50] There is, however, a deep implication of placing myself in the attributionist camp. In so doing, I am placing myself in opposition to a volitionist understanding of responsibility. According to the volitionist, "an agent is responsible for something (an act, omission, attitude, and so on) just in case that agent has—directly or indirectly—chosen that thing."[51] This brings us to another central theme of responsibility and evaluation, control.

b. Control

There is an intuitive notion that responsibility requires control; we are responsible just in case it was up to us to do or not to do an act or to believe or not believe a proposition. More generally, we are evaluable just in case it was up to us to do or not to do an act or to believe or not believe a proposition. The thesis that we are evaluable for an act (or belief) only if we have control over it is meant to satisfy the condition that our actions (or beliefs) are the result of something we do.[52] In the case of belief, it is difficult to square this idea with the

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[49] See Smith, Angela M. "Responsibility for Attitudes." Smith sets the question in terms of moral attributability, moral appraisal, and moral responsibility. Since my interests are in epistemic evaluability, I shall eschew the moral quality of attributability. While it is certainly true that in forming a belief that p we could be doing something subject to moral evaluation, we overwhelmingly form either morally neutral beliefs or we form beliefs in a morally neutral way.

[50] See fn. 39

[51] Levy, "Restoring Control," 2.

[52] See Aristotle, Fischer, *My Way,* and *Deep Control*; Fischer and Ravizza, *Perspectives*, and *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and, Sher, *Who Knew?*.

equally strong intuition that we do not have that kind of control over our beliefs. We have before us three equally unpalatable options: (i) give up the intuition that evaluability for belief requires control, (ii) give up the intuition that we do not have that kind of control over our belief, or (iii) give an account of control that satisfies both intuitions (or at least the motivations behind the intuitions).

If one thinks of reactive evaluability along volitionist lines, the only strategy available is to endorse (iii) and therefore reject (i) and (ii). Since the volitionist maintains that we are evaluable only for that which we choose, she is committed to a strong control condition. The volitionist might, however, defend the idea that we have a strong control over our beliefs but it is not like the control we have our actions. It is not at all clear how she would do this without begging the question, though. Perhaps then it is more plausible to remove the control condition on epistemic evaluability and reject volitionism. To do so, we would need fairly compelling arguments against control and also some account as to why we tend to think evaluability requires control in the first place. This is a tall order, indeed. It might be more fruitful to focus our attention on the notion of control. But, it seems equally difficult to come up with a non-volitionist account of control. What does it mean to say that we have control over some act or belief but that we did not voluntarily choose it?

On close reflection, there is much that we do not voluntarily control for those actions we think of as voluntary. Consider all the chemicals released within various regions of my brain as I type this, all of the flexing and relaxing of the muscles within my wrists and fingers, the signals sent from the motor cortex to the muscles themselves, and so on. In choosing to type the words I am these things are occurring, but I did not choose for them to occur; I chose to type specific words and as a result the under-the-surface events took place. Perhaps belief-formation is like that as well. I can, for example, choose where to direct my attention, fix my

gaze, and to whom to listen, but once I do, subpersonal systems take over. How ought we to understand control (i.e., the kind of control required for epistemic evaluability) in the light of all of the subpersonal processes going on in belief-formation? Further, might there be different control requirements for different kinds of evaluability? Perhaps, understanding the role of awareness and ownership in belief formation is sufficient for evaluability, but accountability requires a kind of volitional control. I return to these questions in chapters two and three.

Conclusion

The question of epistemic competence is a question about the aptness of reactive attitudes. I have argued that to understand this we must home in on and clarify an account of a kind of responsibility—evaluability—that is presupposed in our pervasive epistemic evaluations. I have also urged that the kind of evaluability we are seeking to understand is the kind having to do with one's participation in belief-formation; that is, the kind that treats the subject of evaluation as a believer as opposed to a system with belief forming processes or that merely hosts beliefs. As we begin to think about what it means to be subject to epistemic reactive attitudes, three prima facie conditions emerge.

First, there must be something that explains the connection between the believer and the belief (or between the believer and failure to believe, in the case of omissions). Second, since we think that an individual who is utterly oblivious of herself as a believer is not subject to epistemic reactive attitudes, it appears that some kind of awareness condition (or something

that satisfies the intuitions behind the need for awareness) must be met. Finally, there appears to be a control requirement for warranted evaluation(s) (or, again, something that would satisfy intuitions about the relation between evaluation and control). Since it is the purpose of this work to present a theory of evaluability, and thus competence, that meets the demands for these conditions, I must determine whether intuitions about epistemic control and epistemic awareness are justified. I begin with an examination of doxastic control.

2. Epistemic Competence and Doxastic Control

A natural starting place for an investigation into what underwrites epistemic evaluability is the notion of control. Quick reflection on events wholly out of our control[53] reveals the absurdity of being responsible for them. If my daughter rolls over, falls out of her bed, and begins wailing at 3:30 in the morning, it would be absurd for my wife to think me responsible. In the doxastic realm, reactive attitudes are inappropriate in many instances of automatically formed beliefs. For example, many relatively simple beliefs—e.g., sensory beliefs—are out of our control and thus cannot be used in person-level evaluations.[54] If I am in good light and not too far from it, I cannot help but believe that the car is blue. In ordinary situations, this kind of belief cannot be used as a basis for evaluation of *me*.[55] Examples such as this give us reason for thinking that responsibility and control are in some way related.[56] Since my focus is on what underwrites *epistemic* evaluability, my aim in this chapter is to examine and reject the idea that such evaluability requires doxastic control.

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[53] By "out of our control" here, I mean those events that we could not intervene on. In other words, some events out of our control are such that we could do something or should have done something before them and since we did not our negligence explains our responsibility. Other events are out of our control in such a way that they do not trace back to anything we did (not) or should (not) have done. In this sense, I mean that when we reflect on events of this latter type, we can see a putative connection between control and responsibility.

[54] Complications arise because we do not, unless we are epistemologists or psychologists, typically report based sensory beliefs. The beliefs we use as a basis for evaluation are typically conceptually thick and therefore require the deployment of concepts with which we can be careless in our deployment. Moreover, there is the important distinction between belief and judgment; I may form the belief that p, but then not judge, or endorse, my belief that p. Interestingly enough, when I do form a belief reflection on which leads me to withhold judgment, I am being subject to new causal influences, viz., the reasons that lead me to withhold judgment.

[55] Though it might be used as a basis for evaluation of my eyesight.

[56] There is a long and detailed debate about the role of control in responsibility if determinism is true. Assuming it is, in what sense can we say that we have control over our actions? It is not immediately clear what

I argue that either we cannot exercise control over belief, whether direct or indirect, or that those cases where it might be possible to exercise such control are so narrow in scope as to be of no help in underwriting epistemic reactive attitudes, in general. For example, consider for a moment the sheer amount of beliefs we acquire on trust during our development. Given that so many beliefs are simply taken in without any explicit telling or instruction, and that these beliefs play a significant role in the background that makes possible our later beliefs and commitments, it would be impossible for any kind of putative doxastic control to underwrite reactive evaluability. As Wittgenstein notes, we swallow down consequences with what we learn.[57]

A central part of my argument is that there is an important, though often overlooked, distinction, brought to the fore by William Alston, between the ability to exercise *control* over our beliefs, whether direct or indirect, and the ability to exercise *influence* over our beliefs.[58] According to Alston, to exercise control over belief, either directly or indirectly, is to form a belief that p—where my intention is specifically to believe that p. I decide that I want to believe that p, then I do believe that p—either directly merely by willing to believe that p, or indirectly by doing things that make my belief that p come about. The point is that controlling belief is effectively voluntarily believing (a) specific proposition(s). Likewise, it is also to exercise effective voluntary control over believing that not-p, and withholding belief, i.e., not believing that p and not believing that not-p.[59] By contrast, I exercise influence over

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to say here. Some wish to maintain that there are kinds of control we exert over our actions even if we are determined to do so—even if we ultimately had no choice over doing them. Others argue that genuine control—the kind that would underwrite responsibility—is possible only if determinism is false. I have no wish to settle this issue here, or for that matter, even chime in.

[57] Wittgenstein, L. *On Certainty*. Anscombe and Wright (eds.) (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1975): §141-44.

[58] Alston, W. P. "Deontological Conception of Justification," Tomberlin, J.E. (ed) *Philosophical Perspectives, 2* (1988). Reprinted in Alston, W. P. *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge*, Cornell University Press: Cornell, NY. (1989); and especially chapter four of his, *Beyond Justification: Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation*, Cornell University Press: Cornell, NY. (2005).

[59] cf. *Beyond "Justification"* p 70.

belief just in case I can directly or indirectly affect how I believe. In other words, when I exercise influence over belief my intention is not specifically to believe that p, but to, e.g., believe what is true, avoid what is false, be careful in my thinking, and so on. In doing these things I may end up believing that p, but my intention is not specifically to believe that p.[60] Restated, my central aim in this chapter is to argue that *control* over belief is neither necessary nor sufficient for epistemic competence. However, our examination of doxastic control provides insight into doxastic influence and how it plays a role in epistemic competence.

The phrases, "deciding to believe" and "intending to believe" conjure the idea of *conscious* choice. It would be a mistake to think that all intentional choice is conscious. In intending to walk across the quad, I exercise control over my steps though I am not, typically, consciously choosing where to place my feet. Part of my argument in this chapter will revolve around the idea that the ability to control something comes apart from being aware of what we control. Even if we are typically consciously aware of what we are doing when we exercise control over something, it is possible either to exercise control without awareness or to be aware of something we cannot control. That control and awareness come apart suggests we should attempt, as much as possible, to examine the nature of doxastic control abstracted away

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[60] The paradigmatic example of a doxastic voluntarist is Descartes. At times Descartes appears to be a direct doxastic voluntarist who thinks we can will to refrain from believing things. Indeed, by the end of the first meditation, he refrains from believing anything about the external world. At times, he appears to be an indirect voluntarist. It is not a direct willingness to refrain from believing anything about the external world, but rather a recognition that unless he can rule out the possibility he is being deceived he cannot believe anything about the external world. But, even Descartes own views are at best doxastic influence.

One might argue that Descartes has no claim whatsoever on willing to *believe,* his claims are about *judgment and knowledge*; he doesn't know anything about the external world. He cannot rule out the possibility he is being deceived, so he cannot *judge* there is an external world. Even here, he does not exercise control over his belief or knowledge. To see why we need only consider the criterion of certainty: clear and distinct perception. If we have a clear and distinct perception, (a) we cannot be wrong, and (b) we cannot refrain from believing it. The evidence of the clear and distinct perception is unequivocally compelling; we have no choice but to believe, judge, and know what we clearly and distinctly perceive. Moreover, whatever "control" we exercise merely influences what we will eventually believe on the compelling force of clear and distinct perception.

Recent proponents of doxastic control include John McDowell and Christine Korsgaard. Both take as a starting point that responsibility requires control. See Owens short discussions of McDowell and Korsgaard in his *Reason without Freedom: The Problem of Epistemic Normativity*. (New York: Routledge, 2001).

from conscious awareness. I shall proceed in this way, and return to conscious awareness in the next chapter.

On some interpretations, a person exercises control over her beliefs if and only if she can directly form a belief that p. On other interpretations, a person exercises control over her beliefs if and only if she can directly control some action(s) or event(s) that bring(s) about those beliefs—thus, indirectly controlling her beliefs. Advocates of either direct or indirect doxastic voluntarism share a common idea that responsibility for belief requires some nontrivial control over belief and belief formation.[61] The reasoning that leads one to tie responsibility to voluntary control would likewise lead one to think that evaluability is tied to voluntary control; accordingly, we can be evaluated based on our beliefs only if we have sufficient voluntary control over them.

We can approach this issue in two different directions. According to the first, we begin by thinking through our practice of evaluating individuals who are competent, examine which features are necessary for those evaluations to be warranted—i.e., for those individuals to be accountable—and then work backwards to whether those conditions are necessary for evaluability. For example, we examine what conditions are required for us to be warranted in our ascribing carelessness to Don's belief that President Obama tapped his wires, and then work backwards. According to the second approach, we begin with those exempt from evaluation and seek to discover what conditions they must meet to be evaluable—to, so to say, get into the game of evaluation. The benefit of the first approach lies in the idea that less general concepts inherit the features of their more general parent

[61] Moreover, this commonly held idea appears to be motivated by a commitment to "ought implies can." To say that S ought to believe that p is to maintain that it is within S's ability (not) to believe that p. The corollary of this is that if there are forces, powers, processes, etc. that cause S to believe that p outside of S's control, then it was not within S's ability (not) to believe that p. Hence, S cannot be (wholly) responsible for those beliefs.

concepts. If the less general concept does not require a certain feature, then the more general concept cannot require it either. So, if it can be shown that control is not required for warranted evaluation—the less general concept—then it cannot be necessary for evaluability—the more general concept.[62] For example, if it can be shown that Don can be careless in his belief even if he lacks control over it, then control cannot be required for Don to be evaluable in general. The benefit of the second approach lies in the ability to isolate or reject sufficient conditions. For example, if it can be shown that individuals we treat as exempt satisfy that condition, then that condition cannot be sufficient. I shall take both approaches in the following discussion.

In §§2.2 and 2.3, I examine robust forms of direct and indirect doxastic control and argue they cannot underwrite evaluability. In the final sections, I discuss whether we should think of doxastic control as a kind of ability to monitor our beliefs and belief-acquisitions or instead as an ability to influence our beliefs. This final idea points us in the right direction by focusing the discussion of the nature of competence on deep features of epistemic subjects. Throughout, the idea that doxastic control requires conscious awareness is a recurring theme, a theme taken up in chapter three.

[62] I expand on this kind of reasoning below.

2.1. Clarifications and Potential Misunderstandings

Before turning to examine what role, if any, control over our beliefs has in an account of epistemic competence, we should clarify a few things that could lead to potential misunderstandings: the nature of voluntary belief; the object of evaluation (roughly, whether the subject is being evaluated based on acquiring or maintaining a belief); the kinds of beliefs based on which a subject can be evaluated; and, my methodology regarding cases of intentional belief.

It seems intuitive that we cannot exercise voluntary control over our beliefs; I simply cannot help believing some things and, as Alston notes, even with great incentive I "cannot switch propositional attitudes … just by deciding to."[63] This is not as clear as it might be. To see this, we need to make two sets of distinctions: willing oneself to believe vs. bringing oneself to believe and basic vs. nonbasic action. Roughly, to will oneself to believe is to be to be able to believe anything for any reason or for no reason at all, while bringing oneself to believe is to be able to do things that result in believing. The difference between basic and nonbasic actions is straightforward as well.[64] A basic action is one whose execution does not require prior actions or one that is unanalyzable into other separate actions. So, whether this means that a basic action is a kind of primitive volition or trying,[65] or caused by a belief or a

[63] Alston, "Deontological Conception," 122. Interestingly enough, spelling out what having voluntary control over belief amounts to has not been very clear. For example, in Williams, Bernard. "Deciding to Believe," in Williams, B. *Problems of the Self*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), we find that to believe something merely by deciding to is to "believe something just like that." But, he goes on to argue that this is not a contingent fact about our physiology or psychology as our inability to blush just like that is, but a conceptual truth about what believing is. To cash the idea out this way is to leave things quite vague. For I can bring it about just like that that I believe many things. To illustrate, I can bring it about just like that that I believe that my coat is on the rack by simply looking at the rack. So, voluntarily believing something is not just the ability to bring it about that I believe it, but do so in a certain way. Alston's idea is closer to the point.
[64] Though there is controversy over this, the use I will make of the distinction should not turn on how that controversy is settled.
[65] Non-reductionist accounts of basic action maintain that basic actions are tryings or willings. Meylan, Anne. *Foundations of an Ethics of Belief*. Vol. 15. (Walter De Gruyter, 2013): chapter 1 has a brief discussion of

desire,[66] what sets apart basic from nonbasic actions is that what initiates a basic action does not require a prior action.

Whatever having voluntary control over belief would have to amount to we must be clear that we are not passing off bringing ourselves to believe in a basic way as voluntarily willing ourselves to believe.[67] So, "when we ask why we cannot believe at will, we are not simply asking whether the voluntary, non-basic action of bringing yourself to believe could become a basic one … we are, rather, asking why believing is not like *either* raising your right hand (a basic action) or making soup (a nonbasic action)."[68] To have control over our beliefs, then, is to be able to believe in this way. However, even this kind of voluntary control might be exercised directly or indirectly—basically or non-basically. I directly voluntarily raise my arm when I choose to, but only indirectly voluntarily make soup. Below, I examine whether any kind of voluntary control over belief—whether direct or indirect—is what underwrites epistemic reactive attitudes. For now, it is enough that we become clearer on what voluntary control of belief amounts to and to distinguish it from nearby concepts.

Related to this is the question of what it means to exercise control over something. I exercise control over: the movements of my fingers to type these words; avatars on video games; whether to reflect on my evidence for a belief. To control something is to have the ability to exercise control over it if I want to. These examples have in common the

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reductionist and non-reductionist accounts of basic action; Danto (1965) and Moya (1990) defend non-reductionism about basic actions. See also O'brien (2014: chapters 2-3) for an extended discussion of various stripes of reductionist and non-reductionist accounts of intentional action.

[66] Davidson, Donald. "Actions, Reasons, and Causes." *The Journal of Philosophy* 60, no. 23 (1963): 685–700 is the *locus classicus* of reductionist accounts of intentional action.

[67] Heironymi (2008) argues this is precisely what Bennet's (1990) famous case of the Credamites does. In response to Williams' (1973) claim that if we had the ability to believe at will we would know that we do and hence would know that we could form beliefs while remaining wholly indifferent to their truth value (which violates an essential feature of beliefs), Bennet presents a case that purports to show that believing at will is possible. However, Hieronymi argues that Bennet merely shows that the Credamites only have the ability to bring themselves to believe as a basic action. See Hieronymi, P. "Responsibility for Believing." *Synthese* 161, no. 3 (2008): 357–373; Bennet, "Involuntary;" and Williams, "Deciding."

[68] Hieronymi, P. "Two Kinds of Agency." *Mental Actions*, (2009): 138.

formation of an intention to do something and a subsequent (or what sometimes seems simultaneous) execution of that intention.[69] I intend to type the words in this way and guide my hands and fingers accordingly; I intend for my avatar to go left on the screen and so manipulate the control stick on the gamepad so that the avatar does so; I intend to think about my evidence for a belief and then recall, focus, and attend to that evidence. So we might put the issue of control over belief in terms of answers to two questions:

(1) Can we intend to believe that p?

(2) Can we execute an intention to believe that p such that our execution is causally responsible for the formation of the belief?[70]

A positive answer to (1) does not entail a positive answer to (2). Even if I could intend to believe some particular proposition, I may nevertheless be powerless to execute it. To maintain that we can voluntarily control our beliefs is to maintain that we can intend specifically to believe that p and effectively execute that intention. Now, for this to do the work it needs to do in explaining what underwrites epistemic evaluability, we must be able to effectively voluntarily execute an intention to believe in a wide range of cases, for a wide rage of types of beliefs. We must be able to effectively execute an intention to believe for any beliefs for which we can be evaluated. Or, at the least, those beliefs for which we can be evaluated must be traceable back to beliefs we have effectively executed an intention to have.

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[69] One might object that we can control something but not exercise control over it because we choose not to. In which case, forming an intention would be sufficient but not necessary. I am inclined to think that having control over X, requires the ability to exercise control over X. Now, one does not exercise control over something without forming an intention to do so. Hence, having control over X requires that one form an intention to X. Thanks to Hilary Bok for raising this issue about occurrent vs. dispositional control.

[70] See Heironymi, P. "Controlling Attitudes." Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 87, no. 1 (2006): 45–74 and Buckareff "Deciding to Believe Redux" in Matheson, Vitz (eds.) *The Ethics of Belief*. Oxford University Press: New York, NY (2014)

Contrasted with the ability to exercise control over belief is the ability to influence what we believe. To exercise influence over (a) belief is to be able to do things which are part of the "causal ancestry" of my belief such that were those things not part of the causal ancestry of my belief, I would have had a different belief.[71] According to Alston, such things that comprise part of the causal ancestry of my belief come in "two groups: (a) activities that bring influence to bear, or withhold influences from, a particular candidate, or field of candidates for belief, and (b) activities that affect our general belief-forming habits or tendencies."[72] In the first general group of influences we find activities such as choosing where to direct our attention and for how long, seeking out new evidence, reflecting on a particular argument, and so on. In the second general group of influences we find activities such as training ourselves to recognize good arguments, forming the habit of withholding assent until we have sufficiently considered relevant alternatives, caring about being accurate, and so on.[73] It is undeniable that we do have the ability to exercise control over these aspects of our epistemic endeavors, but this is not to exercise control over belief. In this way, we affect what we believe by exercising control over *how* we believe.

A second source of potential misunderstanding is the object of evaluation. When we evaluate a believing subject for a belief that p are we evaluating them for maintaining or acquiring the belief? Problems arise that suggest the division is not that clean cut. Recall Walter from **lunar landing** in chapter one. Suppose years have passed and Walter still believes the moon landing was faked and has never done anything to support this doubt beyond the initial viewing of the conspiracy documentary. We might evaluate Walter on the basis of failing to, as it were, do his due diligence in keeping the belief, but we might equally

[71] See Alston *Beyond "Justification,"* 74-5.
[72] *Ibid*, 75.
[73] *Ibid.*

evaluate him on having a belief that he formed in such a careless way, or we might combine the two by suggesting that people have some obligations concerning good and bad ways to form beliefs and that forming beliefs in ways that violate those obligations is problematic.[74] The evaluation is targeted at Walter for having a belief he ought not to have because of the way he formed it years ago.[75] The point is that these objects of evaluation overlap; we often evaluate individuals for holding particular beliefs and for the ways they formed the beliefs. The two are not neatly divided.

Since our interest is in the grounds of evaluability in general, allow me to pause to see if the same overlap occurs. Are there different conditions on epistemic competence vis-a-vis holding beliefs or forming beliefs? It seems not. Evaluability applies across the board from belief acquisition, to belief maintenance, to simply holding a belief. I shall assume this is right and that general epistemic competence applies to all the various ways we evaluate individuals based on their beliefs.

Finally, we should consider what kinds of beliefs cause the various reactive attitudes to which the epistemically competent are susceptible. On the one hand, there are beliefs that individuals form which appear to require a sufficient amount of sophisticated understanding or justification such as the belief that humans are causing global warming. We evaluate

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[74] The last point about obligations to know which ways of forming or maintaining beliefs is not quite so clear. Either those obligations are so specific as to set the standard too high for almost everybody or they are too general to be helpful. Since, we are here talking about accountability rather than attributability, the issue is less clear.

If we assume that the relevant epistemic obligations apply after one has met the base requirements for competence, then those obligations cannot be part of competence. However, if we instead think that these obligations are just (part of) what it means to be competent, then we still need to account for how they apply. Either we must be aware of them or not. If we must be aware of them, then control is at best only part of what it means to be competent. If we need not be aware of them, then they must apply to us in virtue of other features. The argument in this chapter entails that it is not in virtue of control that such norms apply and in the next chapter I argue that it is not in virtue of merely being aware of the norms. We shall return to these points in chapters five and six.

[75] This applies to many memory beliefs. We might have a belief that given our background knowledge today it would be responsible to have, but upon learning how we formed that belief we would consider the subject to have been careless in its formation.

believing subjects based on these types of beliefs quite often. Because missteps are possible at many junctures with these kinds of beliefs, it is possible to see where one goes wrong and why. As such, we often create explanations—and even excuses—attempting[76] to identify where one has gone wrong or how one has cottoned on to the truth. It is worth noting that our reactive attitudes and evaluations are not limited to whether one believes accurately or not. More often, we evaluate believing subjects based on why they believe as they do and not simply on what they believe. On the other hand, there are beliefs that are comparably unsophisticated, such as simple perceptual beliefs. It can be tempting to think that we are not evaluated based on simple perceptual beliefs, but this is a mistake.

Even simple perceptual beliefs are fairly sophisticated, requiring the deployment of concepts and cognitive abilities. If I pass myself off as having seen something, I thereby open myself up to challenges and questions concerning it. This is true of rather important things like claiming to see a friend's spouse intimately kissing a stranger, and of mundane things like where my daughter's socks are when we are trying to get her ready. Now, if we mean by simple perception seeing that the object before me is red or square, then it seems we are less prone to participant reactive attitudes. But this, too, is mistaken. The context of the belief and the evaluation plays a large role. If the signal for an assassin is a red square hanging on the balcony and he claims to have seen an orange rectangle, the assassin opens himself up to challenges and questioning about his perceptual beliefs. Put differently, the assassin opens himself up to epistemic evaluation. Likewise, if I am colorblind and my experience of red things is as of green things, then I need to be careful about reporting seeing red things.

[76] See Austin, "Plea," for discussion on an analogous treatment of missteps in actions by understanding the stages and phases of actions. Something rather similar appears to be going on in belief.

It is primarily for these reasons that giving a taxonomy or even a general sketch of the kinds of beliefs we are evaluated based on is problematic. The account I articulate in chapter five has the resources to explain why we are sometimes subject to epistemic evaluation for more or less sophisticated beliefs and sometimes not. To foreshadow, epistemic competence is a kind of knowledge-how, a set of cognitive abilities that we exercise or manifest to form beliefs. But before I can present this view, we need to explain why neither control (this chapter) nor awareness (chapter three) is necessary for epistemic competence.

There is one final source of potential misunderstanding concerning my argument that I would like to preemptively address. To show that doxastic control is neither necessary nor sufficient for epistemic evaluability, I shall attempt to provide examples where individuals form an intention, specifically, to believe a particular proposition. More precisely, in my examples, the individuals *consciously* form an intention, specifically to believe a particular proposition. I recognize this is quite peculiar since we do not often (perhaps ever) consciously form intentions to believe things. More plausible is the idea that we subconsciously form an intention to believe something due to bias, fear, hate, wishful thinking, etc. Further, we probably extremely rarely even do this subconsciously. It is more likely that we do not form an intention to believe something, but that we want something to be true, and therefore "try" to make it true. I do not set out to believe something I don't think is true; I set out to confirm something that I "think" or hope is true. Consider the difference between the father who goes to the hypnotist and asks to be induced to believe that his son is not a murderer as opposed to that same father whose love for his son causes him to be blind to the evidence against his son. The former is quite odd because he wants to have the belief regardless of whether it is true whereas the latter wants to form the belief as a result of coming to know that his son is innocent, but whose bias proscribes that outcome.

He does not just want to believe that his son is innocent; he wants his son to actually be innocent.[77]

If this is a more accurate description of how we intend, specifically, to believe particular propositions, why then do I employ examples where the individuals consciously form an intention? Quite simply I am trying to give my opponents the best possible case for their view. If we cannot exercise doxastic control, either directly or indirectly, over our conscious intentions, specifically, to believe particular propositions, then what reason do we have for thinking that we can do so over subconscious intentions? More to the point, if consciously intended beliefs could not underwrite reactive attributability, then how could subconsciously intended beliefs do that work?

2.2. Direct Doxastic Voluntarism and Competence

I take as a starting point that we can be evaluated for many of our beliefs. As I have suggested, my aim in this work is to understand and explain what underwrites our actual practice of targeting individuals with reactive evaluations. As such, if a given feature is thought to be a part of that explanation and it turns out we do not have that feature, that will show evaluability does not require it; our practice of evaluating people for their beliefs and treating others as evaluable is on much firmer footing than any antecedent theoretical

[77] This is similar to Williams', "Deciding," famous argument against doxastic voluntarism based on the idea that the aim of belief is truth. The hypnotist example highlights the peculiarity of wanting to believe something regardless its truth-value. Thanks to Michael Williams for raising the hypnotist example.

condition we might place on that practice. Given this methodological assumption, the strategy of this section is to show that we do not have the kind of direct voluntary control over belief that could play the role it would have to in an account of epistemic competence. Hence, direct voluntary control over belief can be neither necessary nor sufficient to ground epistemic reactive attitudes.

There is overwhelming agreement by both philosophers and psychologists that we cannot form beliefs at will. Some maintain exercising direct voluntary control over our beliefs is a conceptual impossibility.[78] Others argue it is merely a contingent fact we lack such control.[79] The small minority who do argue for direct doxastic voluntary control maintain that our ability to form beliefs at will is limited in scope; the types of situations in which we can believe at will contain idiosyncratic features not present in most our other belief (acquisitions). In this section, I will briefly dispel the idea that our epistemic competence is constituted by direct voluntary control over belief.[80]

According to direct doxastic voluntarism, we have direct voluntary control over belief if and only if we can execute an effective intention to believe p or not-p merely by deciding to do so. To have this kind of control over belief is to have a power or ability wholly insensitive to the evidence, reasons, and causal processes of belief-formation; it is to maintain that once all the typical causal factors of belief are in we can, by an act of will, believe what we want to believe[81]—we have a kind of strong control over what we believe (for at least some of our beliefs). Hence, direct doxastic voluntarism might also be called strong doxastic voluntarism.

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[78] Williams, "Deciding;" Hieronymi, "Controlling," "Responsibility," "Two Kinds," and "Believing at Will." *Belief and Agency.* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011): 149–187.
[79] Alston, "Deontological," §III & IV; *Beyond "Justification,"* §ii & iii.
[80] This is not to say that control plays no role, however. Ultimately, I shall argue that knowing how to know—understood as having certain kinds of cognitive abilities—constitutes competence. Further, exercising those abilities requires a kind of control. But, as we shall see in chapter 5 and 6, it is quite different from what philosophers ordinarily take our voluntary (whether direct or indirect) control over belief to be.
[81] See Alston, *Beyond 'Justification,'* Ch 4 and Feldman, Richard. "Voluntary Belief and *Epistemic Evaluation."* in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* (2001): 83.

To defend this kind of control as constitutive of epistemic competence one would have to establish the Strong Control Condition:

> **Strong Control Condition**: S is an appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes for a belief that p iff S can exercise direct voluntary control over whether she believes that p.[82]

Although there are both phenomenological and theoretical reasons for thinking we simply do not have this ability to control our beliefs, it is not necessary to argue directly against strong doxastic voluntarism to undermine the strong control condition. Rather, it is sufficient to show that not all the beliefs for which we can be evaluated are beliefs we can exercise strong control over. (Either that, or the beliefs for which we can be evaluated do not trace back to those over which we can exercise such control. However, this amounts to indirect doxastic voluntarism, the subject of §2.3.) Consider two of the strongest kinds of direct voluntary belief: (i) staked beliefs and (ii) world-state-tracking beliefs.

a. Staked beliefs

Ginet presents cases where the believing subject is not sure what to believe, but after deliberating decides to count on it being the case.[83] For example:

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[82] There is a corresponding strong control condition concerning the more restricted or narrow notion of actual appraisals, i.e., those that implicate accountability:

> **Restricted Strong Control Condition**: S is the warranted target of epistemic reactive attitudes, in principle or in fact, for a belief that *p* iff S can exercise direct voluntary control over whether she believes that p.

The broad and narrow parallel here reflects the broad and narrow parallel presented in Section 1.2 between accountability and attributability. We are concerned with what makes a believing subject the appropriate target of evaluations and appraisals as opposed to whether we are justified in the evaluation or appraisal so directed.

[83] Ginet, Carl. "Deciding to Believe." Knowledge, Truth, and Duty, (2001): 64.

> We have started on a trip by car, and 50 miles from home my wife asks me if I locked the front door. I seem to remember that I did, but I don't have a clear, detailed confident memory impression of locking that door (and I am aware that my unclear, unconfident memory impressions have sometimes been mistaken). But given the great inconvenience of turning back to make sure and the undesirability of worrying about it while continuing on, I decide to continue on and believe that I did lock it.[84]

In this case, I have counted on it being the case that I locked the door, p, and therefore have "adopted a dismissive or complacent attitude toward the possibility of losing what [I have] staked on p because of its turning out that not-p."[85] In other words, because I have something at stake, namely the great inconvenience and worry, I decide to believe the proposition that does not inconvenience or worry me even though I have reasons to believe either p or not-p.

It is doubtful that cases of staked beliefs like these are genuine cases of believing the proposition. Instead they appear to be merely *acting as if* the proposition is true.[86] But, even if they were genuine cases of deciding to believe, would that show us we have the kind of control over our beliefs that underwrites epistemic evaluation? Not likely. These cases are rare enough that if the control involved in them is constitutive of epistemic competence it would leave evaluation and evaluability for beliefs lacking such control wholly unexplained. Because I can choose a belief over another where both are equally supported, it does not follow that I have the ability to choose a belief where the evidence for it is overwhelming or underwhelming.

Consider the following kinds of beliefs. In some cases, I may decide to believe that I saw something even though I was not wholly convinced. But, how could my decisions in the abnormal case explain the normal case? I take it that to do so, one would have to argue that

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[84] *Ibid.*
[85] *Ibid*, 65.
[86] See Alston, "Deontological," and *Beyond 'Justification,'* Ch 4.

even though I do not decide in the normal case, the abnormal case shows that I *could*.[87] This in principle ability to choose would then ground the evaluation because it would explain how *I* am responsible due to choices I made or could have made. This would be an instance of what Steup calls hypothetical voluntary control,[88] which we shall return to in section 2.4 since this would not be an instance of *directly* choosing to believe.[89] So, either staked beliefs are not genuine beliefs (but merely acting as if), in which case, control over them does not explain how doxastic control can underwrite evaluations, or, they are so limited in scope as to leave a majority of typical epistemic evaluations unexplained, in which case, staked-belief control does not explain how doxastic control can underwrite evaluability, in general. Does the control exercised in world-state-tracking beliefs fare any better?

b. World-state-tracking beliefs

The second kind of beliefs over which it is suggested we can exercise direct voluntary control are those beliefs about states of the world over which we have control.[90] If I want to

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[87] Further, if one could argue that the abnormal case shows we have the in-principle ability to exercise direct voluntary control over belief in the normal case, one wonders why this more general argument is not made in the first place. Since we have strong reasons to think that we do not have the ability in the normal case, then absent some argument to the contrary, the advocate of direct doxastic voluntarism has merely stipulated we do have the ability. Thus, the promissory note is nothing more than an empty gesture. Thanks to Hilary Bok for pointing this out in comments on an early draft.

[88] Steup, Matthias. "Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology." *Acta Analytica* 15, no. 1 (2000): 25–56.

[89] Steup might disagree. The language he uses to describe hypothetical voluntary control varies. Even in his brief claim that we can exercise hypothetical doxastic control, he is unclear:

> "But can we execute decisions to take alternative doxastic attitudes? The answer to this question is: of course we can, at least under ordinary circumstances. What indeed should stand in the way of executing a decision to take an alternative doxastic attitude? Suppose you believe that p, but you weigh your evidence and decide your evidence contradicts p. What should then prevent you from disbelieving that p? And if you weigh your evidence and decide your evidence neither supports nor contradicts p, what should then prevent you from suspending judgment about p?" (38-39)

At first, it appears that Steup is speaking about directly choosing to believe something, but then he quickly shifts to deciding to weigh evidence.

[90] See Feldman, "Voluntary Belief," 81-3.

believe that right now my youngest daughter is awake, I simply must go wake her up. If there is some reason I need to have this belief, say, because I am paranoid my child might fall into a coma, then I can control whether I believe this simply by controlling the state of the world. If this is right, then I can exercise voluntary control over belief because I can exercise immediate control over states of the world. As Feldman notes, "when I have control over a state of the world and my beliefs about that state track that state, then I have just as much control over my belief about it as I have over the state itself."[91]

Even here, this kind of voluntary control is not necessary to ground epistemic evaluation. On the one hand, this is still only indirect control over belief formation because what one is doing in cases like this is making the world conform to the desired belief outcome and then coming to believe that outcome. The individual is manipulating the evidence or reasons she has for believing. Nevertheless, once those reasons and that evidence are in place, she does not decide to believe the outcome belief, rather, those reasons and that evidence take over and she responds to them. On the other hand, even if it were an instance of direct control over belief, it would still be insufficient to account for evaluability because of the preponderance of beliefs that are not of this kind—not subject to this kind of control.

As this discussion about candidate cases of direct doxastic voluntarism illustrates we tend to ignore, conflate, or take for granted the intervening steps in normal cases of indirect voluntary control. Until we spell out the process of belief formation in putative candidate cases of strong voluntarist belief, we tend to think of them as instances of directly voluntarily controlling what we believe. For example, in the kinds of cases we have been looking at, it is easy to treat staked beliefs as those over which we have control. However,

[91] *Ibid*, 81.

once we look closer we see that these are cases of acting as if the proposition is true rather than genuine belief. Similarly, in world-state-tracking cases, what looks like my believing by deciding to do so is really making myself come to a belief by manipulation of my evidence or surroundings. In neither case do I believe merely because I decide to do so.

c. Strong doxastic control and evaluability

Thus far, our discussion in this section has been couched in terms of accountability. Given that we are evaluated based on (some of) our beliefs, what explains this? But what if we shift to the question of evaluability? Could direct voluntary control over belief, perhaps as an in-principle possibility, underwrite evaluability? Since we have seen that accountability does not require direct voluntary control over belief, the advocate of the strong control condition on evaluability—competence—would have to argue that somehow the ability to exercise direct voluntary control does nevertheless underwrite evaluability. I confess I have no idea how this argument could go for the following reason. Accountability presupposes evaluability. Since the latter is the more general concept, the less general inherits its essential features and not vice versa. Now since the less general concept of accountability does not require strong doxastic control, the more general concept of evaluability cannot require it either, otherwise, as a necessary feature of the more general concept, the less general concept would inherit the requirement of strong control, which it does not. Whatever is required for accountability must be evaluability plus some further condition. Since strong doxastic control is not even

part of the extra conditions for accountability, it cannot be part of the preconditions for accountability, viz., evaluability.[92]

This argument only affects one direction of the biconditional. The other direction, however, is irrelevant to this work. Since I am interested in understanding and explaining epistemic competence given our actual practice of evaluating others—i.e., treating others as epistemically competent—the sufficiency of the hypothetical ability to exercise strong doxastic control as a ground for evaluability does nothing to explain epistemic competence given the *de facto* lack of that ability. In other words, the above arguments show we do not have strong doxastic control and yet still treat individuals as epistemically competent. This shows us that there must be other explanatorily relevant features of belief (or belief formation) that do ground epistemic evaluation. As such, the question of the sufficiency of strong doxastic control for epistemic competence can safely be set aside.

One final point before moving to discuss indirect voluntary control over belief. The rejection of direct voluntarism opens a gap between control and evaluability, in the general sense, and between control and evaluation, in a narrower sense. Since I am not in direct control over that for which I am evaluated, namely my beliefs, we now must think about what can explain our evaluability given this gap. This is nothing new. In accounting for our responsibility for actions, we must also explain this. We are often only indirectly the cause of many actions for which we can be held accountable; frequently we only initiate actions whose outcome is traceable to us. But, it is still a problem in the present context.

I have argued that direct voluntary control over our beliefs does not underwrite epistemic reactive attitudes since we do not have this kind of control over belief.[93] So we are

[92] The general structure of this argument is inspired by Russ Shafer-Landau's argument for ethical non-naturalism. See, Shafer-Landau, Russ. "Ethics as Philosophy." *Metaethics after Moore* (2006): 209.

led to examine indirect voluntary control. Just as we are responsible for actions whose outcomes trace back to us, perhaps we are evaluable based on beliefs caused by something we did earlier. In the next section, I argue that either the putative kinds of indirect voluntary control are nothing more than indirect influence over belief or those cases that appear to be genuine instances of effectively executing an intention to believe, specifically, that p by indirectly bringing oneself to believe are so rare that they could not uphold the pervasive practice of evaluating others based on their beliefs.

2.3. Indirect Doxastic Voluntarism and Competence

Having dispatched with direct voluntarism as the grounds for general epistemic competence, we move to thinking through indirect voluntarism. According to indirect doxastic voluntarism, we can make ourselves come to believe propositions. Proponents of indirect voluntary control claim that by choosing where to focus our attention, by cultivating intellectual habits, by choosing to reflect on our reasons, etc., we indirectly exercise control over what we believe. But, to reiterate, we do not exercise indirect *control* if we do these things to believe *some proposition or other*; rather, we exercise indirect *control* over belief just in case we can do such things in order to make ourselves come to believe *specific propositions.*[94] To

[93] If we did have it, this would be sufficient to explain competence. But since we are examining the actual practice of evaluating others based on their beliefs, this gives no aid or comfort to an advocate of the strong control condition.

[94] At this point, one might rightly object that we are often evaluated on how we came about a belief that p not by focusing on whether we intended to believe, specifically, that p, but on the various methods we used in

exercise indirect control is to form an intention, specifically, to believe that p and then to do something to bring it about effectively to execute that intention. Even so, this kind of doxastic control is considerably weaker than direct control over our doxastic attitudes. Thus, indirect doxastic voluntarism might also be called weak doxastic voluntarism. Accordingly, those who want to argue that having this kind of control underwrites the appropriateness of epistemic evaluability would have to try to establish a weak control condition:

> **Weak Control Condition**: S is an appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes for a belief that p iff S can exercise indirect control over whether she believes that p.[95]

It is important to note right away that some might think this mischaracterizes the indirect voluntarist. It is not that we exercise control over a particular (set of) belief(s), but that we control ourselves in a way that affects our belief formation. So, when we evaluate a person based on their beliefs, we are evaluating them on the choices and control they had over how they form beliefs (e.g., whether they so regulate themselves as to be good knowers) or on things they did that caused them to believe as they do (e.g., choosing to attend to some evidence, reflecting on their reasons for belief, maintaining focus on particular aspects of a problem, etc.). As I have already made clear,[96] this confuses *influence* over belief with *control* over belief. To so regulate ourselves is not to have the ability to exercise control over our

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eventually arriving at the belief that p. So why restrict the discussion to indirect voluntary control over specific beliefs? My reasons are partly programmatic and partly substantive.

I am trying to build my case by starting with those kinds of control that are least plausible as candidates for what underwrites epistemic evaluation and proceeding to those more plausible. I am doing this because I think that separating what control is from the other features more commonly associated with it is clearer when we proceed this way. Later, in §2.5, I return to an even weaker kind of "control" we exercise over our beliefs, but suggest that we think of this as indirect influence instead of control. Thanks to Hilary Bok for raising this issue.

[95] Just as with the strong control condition, there is a more restricted or narrow weak control condition.

> **Restricted Weak Control Condition**: S is the warranted target of epistemic reactive attitudes, in principle or in fact, for a belief that p iff S can exercise indirect control over whether she believes that p.

[96] See §2.1.

beliefs, even though doing so does affect what we believe.[97] We shall return to doxastic influence in §2.6, 5.3, and 6.1. But first, I want to examine four different kinds of indirect voluntary control: deep hypothetical or reflective, long-range, and monitoring.[98] I shall argue that either so-called indirect control is nothing more than indirect influence or that if there are genuine cases of effectively executing an intention indirectly to believe, specifically, that p, they are too rare to underwrite reactive attributability.

a. Deep hypothetical (reflective) control

Let us begin by turning our focus on hypothetical control. Matthias Steup presents three ways we might understand voluntary control over belief: categorical, hypothetical, and deep voluntary control. The first type of control implies strong doxastic control and so the arguments of the previous section apply.[99] The latter two types of voluntary control over belief are slightly more plausible. "If we can execute a decision to take a doxastic attitude toward p that is different from the one we have actually taken, then we have hypothetical voluntary control over our doxastic attitude toward p."[100] What sets apart hypothetical from deep voluntary control is that the latter includes a kind of internal mechanism meant to

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[97] My thanks to Hilary Bok for pointing out this possible response on behalf of the indirect voluntarist.
[98] Another way people have tried to justify epistemic evaluability by appeal to doxastic control is by suggesting that we exercise doxastic control via the belief policies we adopt. Accordingly, we get:

> **Belief-policy Voluntary Control:** S has belief-policy voluntary control over a belief that p iff S can voluntarily adopt a belief policy and adopting that belief policy is (at least partly) causally responsible for S's belief that p.

We need not go into all the details about why such policies cannot underwrite epistemic evaluations, though. It is easy to see that belief policies are not means of executing effective intentions to believe, specifically, that p. For an excellent discussion of belief policies see Peels, "Belief Policies Cannot Ground Doxastic Responsibility." *Erkenntnis* 78, no. 3 (June 22, 2012): 561–69.
[99] See Steup, "Doxastic Voluntarism," §6.
[100] *Ibid*, 38.

avoid problems of brainwashing and manipulation; were my beliefs merely under hypothetical control my decision to take a different doxastic attitude toward p might be the result of being hypnotized. The advocate of deep control demurs; such a decision is not the result of a decision procedure or mechanism that is relevantly part of me.[101] So, let us focus on deep hypothetical voluntary control:

> **Deep Hypothetical Voluntary (Reflective) Control**: S has deep hypothetical voluntary (reflective) control over a belief that p iff S can voluntarily execute a decision to take a doxastic attitude toward p.

The key to understanding deep hypothetical voluntary control lies in what it means to execute a doxastic decision. Steup relies heavily on the parity of reasoning between practical deliberation and theoretical deliberation. Just as we can weigh the reasons for various courses of action, we can weigh the evidence for various propositions. But the two are importantly disanalogous as well because of the effort involved in executing a practical decision. In the practical realm, once I decide on a course of action, it is left for me still to initiate that course of action and to act according to my decision. This is not (typically) the case with doxastic decisions. Once I have brought my theoretical deliberations to a close, ordinarily, I simply form a belief. But, this is not always the case. A man brought up in a racist household may decide that his racist beliefs are false (even morally wrong) and give them up, but still find it hard to execute the decision to not have racist beliefs anymore.[102]

It is not clear to me that we should call this indirect control over belief. On the one hand, taking a different doxastic attitude is nothing more than exercising *direct* control over belief. I believe that p, but for whatever reason do not want to do so anymore and so I

[101] See Steup (*ibid*) for a more in-depth discussion of these different kinds of doxastic control.
[102] *Ibid*, 35.

decide to take a different attitude toward p, viz., believe not-p. In this case, the arguments of §2.2 apply. On the other hand, executing a decision to take a different doxastic attitude toward p might be nothing more than deciding (or realizing) that my belief that p is not as strongly supported as I thought it was and so reexamining my evidence (reasons) for believing that p. In this way, I do take a different attitude towards p—my attitude changes from confident that p, to less than confident (or, perhaps, suspect about) p. The question is whether this amounts to exercising indirect *control* over belief.

When I decide to take a different doxastic attitude toward p, can I do so to believe a specific proposition? Either way we answer this question, it brings no aid or comfort to the idea that doxastic control underwrites epistemic evaluability. On the one hand, obviously if we cannot take a different doxastic attitude in order to execute an intention to believe *specific* propositions, then Steup's hypothetical control is actually a form of doxastic influence and not doxastic control. On the other hand, the ability to take a different doxastic attitude toward p supports the claim that indirect doxastic control underwrites epistemic evaluability only if in taking a different doxastic attitude we are exercising indirect doxastic control over our *belief* that p. The question, then, is whether taking different doxastic attitudes constitutes indirect control. Here, we run into issues about what we *control*.

Suppose Jesse believes his co-worker is guilty of embezzling from their company, but that he does not want to believe this about his friend and so forms the intention to believe that his friend hasn't embezzled. He then takes a different doxastic attitude toward the belief that his friend embezzled. (Of course, ordinarily, we don't do this at all; ordinarily we say things like, "I refuse to believe that" and that bias sets us on a path to confirm it by ignoring some important evidence, not taking adequate stock of the available evidence, and so on.) But what attitude does he take? If merely by intending to do so Jesse could take the attitude

that his friend did not embezzle, then he would have direct control over his belief, which we have seen is not possible. So, the attitude that he takes must be something closer to a *hope* that his belief is wrong or a *desire* to be absolutely sure that he is right before he commits to the belief that his friend embezzled. Neither of these attitudes imply that Jesse exercises control over his belief; neither implies that he will execute his intention to believe that his friend has not embezzled.

In order for Jesse's exercise of hypothetical control to count as doxastic control he would have to be able to will himself to believe that his friend has not embezzled by taking a different doxastic attitude. The intention to believe that his friend has not embezzled may function to cause him to reevaluate his evidence, but the ability to step back to determine if his evidence suffices for his belief is not to effectively execute an intention, specifically, to believe that his friend has not embezzled. If Jesse does come to that belief it is either because the evidence convinces him—i.e., the evidence is strong enough that it would be unreasonable of him (or anybody with the relevant background knowledge) to persist in the belief that his friend embezzled—or that he deceives himself into believing that his friend is innocent, perhaps because of unconscious confirmation bias. In the former case, the doxastic decision is not to believe that his friend is innocent, but rather because of affection for his friend, he is prompted to take the decision to reexamine, or seek out new, evidence. If the latter, then the negative evaluation we direct at Jesse is grounded in his failure to be governed by the appropriate norms and not in the failure to exercise control over his belief. Cases like this are quite common; we often decide that we may be mistaken in our beliefs. In many cases, this is because: we realize we did not have enough information, new information has come to light, because of what is at stake in the belief, or a combination of these. When

this happens, we do execute a doxastic decision to reexamine our reasons for our belief, but we do not execute a decision, specifically, to believe something different.

There may be genuine cases where we do effectively execute a decision to form specific beliefs by exercising hypothetical control. For example, I may be worried about my wife who is later than usual coming home. Perhaps I just watched a particularly troubling crime drama and now I want to effectively execute a doxastic decision to believe my wife is safe. As a result, I call her; she answers her phone and tells me she is fine and in a taxi on her way home. It appears I have effectively executed a doxastic decision to believe that my wife is safe. Even here, it is not clear that I am not simply reassuring myself of something I already believe. More than effectively executing an intention to believe my wife is safe, I appear to be seeking out additional evidence for my belief because something has happened that caused the stakes to go up for me.

More pointedly, I do not want merely to believe that my wife is safe, I want to *know* that she is; I want it to be true that she is safe and so do something, viz., call her, to make sure that it is. What appears to happen is that I have the belief that she is safe, but the crime drama makes salient the possibility she is not, thereby ratcheting up the standards for knowledge. Thus, my knowledge that my wife is safe is undermined by the live possibility that she is not.[103] When I call my wife, I find she is safe and I become more confident in a belief that I already have. But this is not effectively to execute an intention, specifically, to believe that my wife is safe since I have had that belief the whole time.

Finally, this case is structurally similar to Ginet's locked door example, with a notable difference. In the Ginet example, I neither believe nor know that I locked the door and given there is no way to ensure I did, I act as if I did. However, the thought that I did not lock the

[103] See Fantl, Jeremy & Matthew McGrath, *Knowledge in an Uncertain World.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) for an excellent discussion of the role of stakes and personal interests in knowledge ascriptions.

door makes salient the possibility that I did not. Until I rule out this possibility, I cannot induce either belief or knowledge. In the present case, I had knowledge that she was safe and therefore believe it until the crime drama made the possibility that she is not safe salient. Until I can rule out that possibility, my claim to know she is safe is undermined. In this case, I can rule that out by calling her. However, suppose she did not answer her phone. My knowledge that she is safe is undermined until I rule out the live possibility she is not safe. I can, of course, act as if she is safe; perhaps even do things to increase my confidence of this. Even here, I am not controlling my belief so much as seeking out reasons to make me more confident in a belief that I already have. Note, that those reasons I seek out either increase my confidence that my wife is safe or not. They are either compelling reasons, in which case my confidence increases merely by having those reasons, or they are not compelling reasons, in which case my confidence remains the same or goes down merely by having those reasons. Further, if they are compelling or not, it will be because of other reasons, background knowledge or assumptions, etc., and not because I have decided to be compelled by those reasons, or have taken a different doxastic attitude toward my belief.

Perhaps I am incorrect and this is a case of indirectly controlling my belief. Is this enough to show that indirect control underwrites epistemic evaluability? As we saw in the examination of direct doxastic voluntarism, the kinds of cases where we may have such an ability are vanishingly rare to do the required work. Hypothetical control can underwrite epistemic evaluation only if either we can exercise hypothetical control over each kind of belief for which we can be evaluated or those beliefs ultimately trace back to beliefs over which we can exercise hypothetical control. But we cannot exercise such control over our ordinary perceptual, introspective, or memory beliefs. The best we can do is put ourselves in a position to form a range of beliefs. Doing so is not effectively executing an intention,

specifically, to believe that p, But rather to exert influence over what we believe. Thus, we simply do not have deep or reflective *control* over our beliefs. Let us turn next to long-range voluntary control.

b. Long-range voluntary control

We cannot either directly or indirectly effectively execute an intention, specifically, to believe that p immediately. That is, we cannot, as Alston puts it, bring it about that we form a belief that p "right away, in one intentional act."[104] Surprisingly, we do sometimes, though unreliably, execute an intention, specifically, to believe that p through a series of acts. We can, oddly enough, exercise long-range voluntary control over (some) of our beliefs:

> **Long-range Voluntary Control:** S has long-range voluntary control over a belief that p iff S effectively executes an intention, specifically, to believe that p through a series of intentional actions designed to produce the belief that p.

My argument against doxastic control as the ground for epistemic evaluation (and evaluability) has revealed concepts gradually more and more removed from the phenomena they are meant to explain. I began with direct immediate control over belief and found that the putative examples of such control were nothing more than a type of doxastic influence. Next, I turned to a kind of indirect immediate control and found that there, too, examples of indirect immediate control were nothing more than doxastic influence. Before us now is the notion of a type of control that is quite removed from the evaluable belief that such control brought about. This alone should indicate that it will not be robust enough to underwrite reactive evaluability. Nevertheless, we must first ask whether they are genuine

[104] Alston, "Deontological Conception," 274.

cases of effectively executing an intention, specifically, to believe that p through a series of actions designed for that purpose.

Prima facie, there seem to be genuine examples long-range voluntary control. For:

> people do set out on long range projects to get themselves to believe a certain proposition, and sometimes they succeed in this. Devices employed include selective exposure to evidence, selective attention to supporting considerations, seeking the company of believers and avoiding non-believers, self-suggestion, and (possibly) more bizarre methods like hypnotism. By such methods people sometimes induce themselves to believe in God, in materialism, in communism, in the proposition that they are loved by X, and so on.[105]

There are three points about long-range voluntary control I should like to make. The first two are familiar and concern whether long-range voluntary control is a genuine form of doxastic control or whether it, too, is another example of doxastic influence, and whether if there are genuine cases of long-range voluntary control they cover enough kinds of beliefs to underwrite reactive evaluability. The final point raises an issue about the role of awareness in reactive evaluability.

There are, to be sure, things someone can do to increase the probability that they will come to believe specific propositions, but it is far from clear that a generally unreliable execution of an intention could be called a kind of control or could be reliable enough to underwrite epistemic evaluability. The thought that it is appears to be based on an analogy with long-range control over action. I intend to make stir-fry and go through a series of steps to do so. In this way, I exercise control over my action of making stir-fry. Notice right away a putative disanalogy. The control I exercise in making stir-fry is over the action and

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[105] See Feldman ("Voluntary Belief," 80-2); and Alston (*Beyond 'Justification'* ch. 4). As another example, we can turn to the character of Leonard in Christopher Nolan's 2000 film *Memento*. Leonard suffers from short-term memory loss and tattoos notes to himself all over his body to help him solve his wife's murder (Nolan 2000). In a twist, knowing that he will forget his reasons for writing himself a note that incorrectly identifies his wife's murder, he proceeds to write down "clues" that will eventually cause him to believe that particular person he is currently angry with is his wife's murderer.

not the product of the action, stir-fry (what would it even mean to say I exercise control over stir-fry?). But, in the case of belief, I am supposed to exercise control over what I believe—the epistemic analogue of the product of the act of believing. We might think this is just a consequence of the internal/external divide in the two cases. The product of my act of believing is a belief, an internal state, whereas the product of my act of making stir-fry is the stir-fry, and external thing. But, we can see that our control in the case of making stir-fry is internal as well; I control my act of making stir-fry—how I make stir-fry. In a similar way, I control how I believe. This is not what the advocate of long-range control wants if she wants to attempt to ground reactive evaluability in our ability effectively to execute long-range doxastic control. For exercising control over how I believe is to do things in such a way that I believe something or other, and not, per the control condition, something specifically intended. In other words, to shift from the ability to exercise control over what I believe to how I believe, is to shift from control to influence.

I mentioned above that there is another problem with long-range control, viz., that one could not be reliable in the exercise of it. This is because "it requires the capacity to bring about a state of affairs, C, by voluntarily doing a number of different things over a considerable period of time, typically interrupted by activity directed to other goals"[106] An analogy to archery is apt. In archery, I intend to hit the target by a series of acts, but once I release the arrow, I no longer have any control over whether the arrow hits the target. To be sure, I do exercise control over how I position myself, where I aim, how much tension I put in the bowstring, and so on. Many things can happen that cause my shot to be unsuccessful: a freak wind could blow it off course, the target could fall over, the fletching could fall off, and so on. Part of the skill of archery is adjusting for things one foresees as affecting one's

[106] Alston *Beyond "Justification," 72.*

shot. Long-range control is similar in that I can do things to put myself in the best position to believe, specifically, that p (i.e., hit my intended target). And like archery, many things can go wrong in the attempt. In fact, in an exercise of long-range control, depending on how long the range is, I would need to constantly course correct. If I inadvertently become exposed to some piece of information that is likely to cause me not to believe what I have intended, I must now engage in other projects of belief-formation that overcome this new piece of information. Each such exposure compounds the unlikelihood of me acquiring my intended belief; each such exposure undermines the amount of control I have over what I believe. It is difficult to see how the ability to exercise long-range control can ground accountability ascriptions—i.e., warranted evaluations—let alone evaluability, more generally.

Add to this the further problem that even if long-range control were not just another instance of doxastic influence, one would be hard-pressed to explain how such an ability could possibly matter to evaluating individuals for their "immediate" beliefs. I turn on the news and see a report that I relay to my wife. It is perfectly reasonable of her to think me evaluable based on what I say about the report even though long-range control is nowhere in sight. The sheer amount of "immediate" perceptual, testimonial, introspective, and memorial beliefs coupled with the amount of effort it would take to control them through a series of long-range acts makes it implausible in the extreme that such control is required or even sufficient to underwrite reactive evaluability.

There is one final point about long-range control I want to make that concerns the role of norms in epistemic evaluation. Thus far, I have not discussed norm recognition because I wanted to keep the concept of control clear from entanglements that we typically conflate with it. To be able to exercise control over something does not require that one has the ability to recognize why someone is doing what they are doing. But, when we evaluate

epistemic subjects, we do so in ways corresponding to the putative reactive attitudes we have towards them. The reactive attitudes we have (and therefore the evaluations we direct) towards others are tied to normative standards. If we did not think that the epistemic subject met, failed to meet, or went beyond an appropriate standard, then our attitudes would make no sense. Second, because our reactive attitudes are tied to normative standards, whether those attitudes are appropriate is (at least partly) fixed by our ability to meet them. Suppose I think Joe's belief is stupid. Not just that the belief itself is stupid, but that Joe, in believing it, is in some sense being stupid. My attitude toward Joe makes sense or is appropriate only if there is some standard or norm that Joe failed to meet and that failure is attributable to him. To say that the belief is stupid, is to attribute some quality to the belief, perhaps it is based on faulty grounds.[107] But to say that Joe, in believing it, is in some sense being stupid, we have to ask why? It is not simply because he believes something stupid. Children believe stupid things all the time—i.e., children believe things that it would be stupid for adults to believe—and we don't think them stupid for doing so. This suggests that reactive attitudes are directed at believers and not what they believe, even if we sometimes speak as if the belief itself is the target of the reactive attitude. Hence, when Joe believes something stupid, it is because Joe, in believing it, is being (or acting) stupid and this because Joe has done something stupid.

If Joe is stupid in believing that p, then he should not have believed that p. Why? If it turns out that Joe believed that p because all of what he takes to be relevant evidence points to p, would we still think that Joe has believed stupidly? I do not see why not. Suppose Joe's

[107] We don't judge beliefs in the abstract like this, though. Instead we would say something like "anyone who believes that is stupid". But then, we are not judging or evaluating a belief, but instead commenting on the merits of a claim. We do judge claims all the time, but in so doing we are tacitly suggesting those judgments and evaluations would apply to the individuals who believe such things. People, and not claims, are the target of reactive epistemic evaluation.

belief is that climate change is a hoax, that he believes this because he watches Fox News exclusively, and Fox consistently denies the reality of climate change. It is perfectly reasonable for us to maintain that Joe's belief makes sense and that he ought not to believe it. And he ought not to believe it because watching Fox News is not a good source of information. In which case, he ought not to watch Fox News (or he ought not to watch only Fox News) to be informed. Why? Again, looking at his reasons for doing so may perfectly explain why he "should", according to his perspective, watch Fox News.[108] Still, although his choice to watch Fox is under his control and makes sense according to his background reasons, religiously watching Fox News is not a good thing to do. But from Joe's perspective, his choice to watch it is not stupid; he may believe this is the best way to be informed.[109] Now, if we are trying to account for the appropriateness of reactive attitudes given indirect *control*, then his intentional actions that lead to his stupid belief require both *control* and some kind of recognitional capacity.[110] He must be able to recognize (at least, in general) the norms and standards that govern acceptable belief formation, even if he fails to recognize that his epistemic practices, in this case, fail to meet those standards. But again, even here, he does not control what he believes, only how he believes.

The preceding three paragraphs seem to get us, at best, only to that claim that we can and do indirectly influence our beliefs. We do this in all the ways indicated: by adopting belief policies; by training our faculties over the course of our lifetime to be more finely discriminatory; by developing intellectual habits of weighing evidence, withholding assent; by cultivating intellectual virtues such as curiosity, open-mindedness, studiousness, and the like.

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[108] For a brief discussion of the logic of "ought," see Harman, Gilbert. "Moral Relativism Defended." *The Philosophical Review* 84, no. 1 (1975): 3–22.
[109] Assuming he does think this and he is not watching Fox News because, say, he likes being angry and Fox News makes him angry. Thank to Hilary Bok for raising this point.
[110] In chapter 3 we examine whether awareness is necessary and sufficient.

So, if we have any indirect control over our beliefs, as such, it is found in our ability to manipulate our environment to make ourselves come to specific beliefs. Recall the examples of state-tracking beliefs. Yet, examples such as these are too rare to underwrite epistemic evaluation in general. In other cases, where we engage in long-term projects to control what we believe, we are nowhere near reliable enough to explain general competence.

Before turning to reasons why indirect control is not sufficient for epistemic competence, it will be helpful to reiterate my target in this chapter. I am arguing that we do not have control over belief where this is to be understood as an ability either directly or indirectly to will ourselves to believe, specifically, that p. I have not argued that control plays no role in understanding or explaining epistemic competence. What should be clear from the argument so far is that the object of control is not what we believe. Rather, we when exercise doxastic control, we exercise control over how we believe. In other words, we exercise control in such a way that influences what we believe. It may be helpful to contrast *doxastic* control—the ability either directly or indirectly to make ourselves believe, specifically, that p—with *epistemic* control—the ability to exercise control over capacities and abilities that affect belief and knowledge, perhaps by where we focus attention, the habits we form, and so on. Furthermore, I think epistemic control, when understood within the context of an ability-based know-how, plays a significant role in an account of epistemic competence.

The arguments of this section thus far have focused on whether voluntary control over belief is necessary for competence. What should we think about voluntary control as sufficient for competence? One the one hand, even if the arguments marshaled against indirect voluntarism in this section fail, it does not follow that such an ability underwrites epistemic evaluation in general. There are a host of beliefs based upon which we can rightly

be evaluated not affected in any way by indirect voluntary control. On the other hand, it seems that the noncompetent believer might be able to exercise this kind of control.

A child certainly has the ability to follow belief policies, to manipulate the world in important ways, and so on. Yet, children are not the appropriate targets of epistemic evaluation. For example, a young child might manipulate the world to make a belief turn out true, perhaps to avoid discipline. A parent tells the child, you may not get your toy right now and the child is later seen with the toy. When the parent says, "I told you not to get your toy." The child replies, "I didn't get my toy, my little sister got it." She may even emphasize things, "You told *me* not to get my toy, and *I* didn't."

The point is that she may believe that she is obeying the parent. In fact, children follow the "letter of the law" quite often not to be difficult or contrary, but because they are learning about idiomatic uses of language. They *believe* they are doing what is expected of them, but they fail to realize that what they are doing is an actual instance of the thing they are not supposed to be doing. These cases give us strong reason to reject the idea that indirect doxastic voluntarism is even sufficient for competence. I conclude, therefore, that neither strong nor weak doxastic voluntarism underwrites epistemic evaluation, and therefore evaluability. We turn now to whether the kind of control we exercise over belief is a kind of monitoring.

2.4. Direct Intervention, Monitoring, and Awareness

If the kind of control we exercise over our beliefs is not to be explained by an ability directly to form beliefs simply by deciding to do so or by our ability to voluntarily form beliefs by means of intermediary intentional acts, then perhaps what we mean is that we have an ability to monitor our beliefs and belief formation. That is, perhaps our ability to take stock of our beliefs is what matters. The mechanisms by which we do so may or may not be crucial here. Suppose our ability to monitor our doxastic situation turns on a reflective capacity. Then monitoring turns into a form of indirect control of the hypothetical variety. Suppose, instead, that such an ability is a function of directly intervening in our formation of beliefs—a negative control. However we understand this and whatever the mechanisms by which we engage in this "control" over our beliefs, it will become clear that it is not just control at work, but rather something like control and awareness. To see why, let us examine control as a kind of monitoring:

> **Monitoring Control**: S has monitoring control over a belief that p iff S can monitor (i) her belief that p or (ii) her belief-forming capacities in such a way as to bring about the belief, specifically, that p.

Monitoring by itself cannot ground evaluability since either it is only when coupled with an ability to do something about what we monitor that matters or an awareness of what we are monitoring. If we understand our capacity for monitoring in terms of an ability to intervene, we run into a further dilemma: either our ability to intervene in the formation of a belief is best thought of as control over that belief—in which case, the arguments of the preceding sections take over—or intervention amounts to nothing more than an ability to

withhold assent to a belief.[111] Based on the previous sections, it should be clear what I would say about withholding assent as control. Namely, in very many beliefs, the evidence is so overwhelming that we simply do not have the ability to withhold assent. Or, more exactly, while we may, in moments of philosophical consistency and tremendous psychological exertion, withhold our *assent* to a proposition; it is implausible in the extreme that we actually fail to believe it. Further, to require our ability to do so for epistemic competence excludes both far too many individuals and far too many beliefs from epistemic evaluation. So, let us think about why monitoring our beliefs (or belief formation/acquisition/maintenance) cannot be a kind of control, properly speaking.

The advocate of monitoring might have in mind the following line of argument. To simplify things let us say that each action (or belief) is a chain.[112] So an action-chain has something like the following schema: intention-event, intention-event communicates to movement-event, movement-event communicates to body, body event. In the case of belief, it would look like this: stimulus (where this is meant to imply anything from a perceptual or sensory event to a recalling event, to the initial thought of an inference, etc.), processing, interpretation, belief.[113] There are various ways we can influence an action-chain: we might change our mind about our intention (e.g., I might intend to go get something to eat, but realize that if I go into the kitchen I could wake my napping daughter); or, I might realize

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[111] In chapter 5, we shall return to the ability to withhold assent as an example of revising our belief in light of justifying reasons.

[112] I focus on simple actions because more complex actions are arguably broken up in to several simple actions. So, my desire to write this thesis is broken up in to very, very, very many days of typing, reading, thinking, etc. And each word I write is broken up into discrete simple actions of striking a single key.

[113] The details of how all this actually occurs are not important for the present argument. All that is required is that there are some events in an action-chain that happen completely without our directly regulating or causing them (like the brain sending signals to the muscles and the muscles flexing and relaxing). Once we see this, the idea of direct control must be radically revised or repudiated altogether. Note, that the characterization of an action in this way is neutral with regard to the question of what exactly constitutes the action. For my purposes, we need not settle the issue of whether the action is the trying or the movement (see fn. 60, above). It is sufficient we recognize that however we identify the action there will be subpersonal processes (e.g., brain-events, muscle contractions, etc.) that we do not directly regulate.

that my body is not doing what I wanted it to do and make adjustments; or, I might have an end goal in mind and come to think my original intention is not the best way of meeting that goal. In each of these various ways I could possibly influence or control an action I can regulate only a small subset (if any) of the different components in the action-chain. Similarly, there are various ways we can influence a belief-formation chain. We might affect the stimulus (by either taking in a different stimulus—e.g., looking elsewhere—or concentrating on an aspect of the stimulus—e.g., thinking about the assumptions of a particular claim). And, we might affect the interpretation of a belief-formation stimulus by gathering more evidence, say.

Control over our actions and beliefs manifests in our ability to adjust our actions and beliefs/belief acquisitions. If this is what control is then our ability directly to intervene in the action-chain will be important. We monitor ourselves and intervene where necessary. We have all had the experience of driving home from work only to realize that one does not recall anything about the drive; we drove home on autopilot, we say. And we have all had the experience where we "clicked in" to autopilot because we were on a familiar route, but were actually going someplace else. For example, after years of driving from Baltimore to Washington, D. C. on I-95, it has become such a habit for me that I scarcely have to think at all about the drive. However, one evening I needed to pick someone up from the airport and I realized that I just missed my exit. My brain, from habit, began to get into the flow of driving straight home, but I quickly realized that I was not supposed to drive straight home and adjusted my drive accordingly by taking the next exit and turning around.[114]

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[114] In cases where my intention to take the unfamiliar exit fails and I instead continue on the familiar route, I commit what is sometimes called a double capture error. See Roessler, Johannes, and Naomi Eilan. "Agency and Self-Awareness: Mechanisms and Epistemology," 2003.
4; and Reason, James. *Human Error.* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1990): 68 for discussions of this kind of a failure of control.

There are two ways to think about this monitoring ability. On the one hand, we might think of monitoring along the lines of simple input/output relations. The inputs are the various components of the action-chain and the outputs are the adjustments or interventions. Unfortunately, this not the kind of monitoring we need for an evaluability-grounding control. Consider a monitoring program in a computer. The job of this program is to make sure all processes and programs are running efficiently, say. So, this program has as its inputs the various other programs running. Upon coming to a problem, the monitoring program adjusts accordingly. Put differently, this understanding of monitoring our actions maintains that we control our actions to the extent that we can adjust. But, we might make adjustments in ways that do not imply evaluability. Or, more precisely, our subpersonal systems and faculties might adjust our behavior in such a way that there is no connection between the action and the agent, and hence no evaluability.

Consider a reflex arc. We pull our hand away from a hot dish or stove before becoming consciously aware of the heat from the stove. In this case, a stimulus activates a pain receptor that travels to the spinal column that innervates an excitatory neuron which then excites the alpha motor neuron in the arm causing us to withdraw our hands.[115] Here we have a type of monitoring as nothing more than signaling. This cannot be what we need to ground evaluability. There is no sense in which I am evaluable for removing my hand from the burning stove like the sense in which I am for grabbing my daughter's hand when she is about to touch the stove. That is, if I am evaluable at all for removing my hand from the stove in the case of a flexor reflex, it is merely causal. But the sense of evaluability we are interested in is normative and not merely causal; it is the kind that makes appropriate certain attitudes and judgments of individuals based on those acts and beliefs. Hence, if our

[115] http://neuroscience.uth.tmc.edu/s3/chapter02.html.

evaluability for our beliefs is underwritten by monitoring ability it cannot be this type of signaling.

On the other hand, we might think that monitoring requires an awareness of what is going on. The reason why the computer program is not responsible is that it is not aware; it does not possess even a minimal understanding of *why* it is doing what it is doing or *that* it is doing what it is doing. Notice that in the autopilot example, I realized (i.e., became aware) that I missed the exit. There are different ways to read this awareness component of monitoring, however. We might think that monitoring is nothing more than awareness; in being aware of our belief formation we are *ipso facto* monitoring it. If this is the right way to think about it, it implies nothing about our ability to adjust or correct ourselves and is therefore not an alternative account of control, which is what the advocate needs to explain evaluability. To keep things clearer, I will not think of this as monitoring. Instead, this way of thinking about the condition that underwrites responsibility is nothing more than awareness.

If the advocate of monitoring wants to keep some self-corrective and adjustment ability, then it is not clear how our ability to monitor ourselves as a ground for evaluability is in any way different from the idea that our ability to control our beliefs is what grounds evaluability. It is worse than that since it requires awareness plus an ability to control. But as we have seen control is not required to underwrite evaluability, and hence competence. So, our ability to monitor our beliefs and belief formation understood as a kind of control is not what explains the appropriateness of epistemic evaluation. Perhaps the ability to monitor our beliefs conceived as a kind of conscious awareness of belief (formation) does. We shall examine this thought in the next chapter. First, allow me to suggest that the kind of "control" we need over belief is actually an ability to influence our beliefs. More precisely, the ability to influence our beliefs, I shall argue, is a kind of reasons-responsiveness that

plays a constitutive role in epistemic competence. This latter claim is only hinted at here. In chapters five and six, I show that the ability to influence belief is a part of the ability to recognize and assess justifying reasons, and to revise one's beliefs in light of those reasons.

2.5. Doxastic Influence

We do not exercise voluntary control over belief or belief formation in the sense that we do not effectively choose (decide or will), specifically, to believe that p. Of course, we might reflect on some of the causal factors and later reject the belief that p, but this is just to be subject to a new set of causal factors. Now we might be persuaded at this point to simply drop the control condition and look elsewhere. Alternatively, we may reexamine the assumption that we have control over our beliefs, as such. In our examination of indirect voluntarism, it was suggested that while we do not have the ability to exercise *control* over our beliefs, we do seem to have the ability to influence them. I want briefly to look at this idea conceived as a kind of reasons-responsiveness. That is, we might think that our ability to adopt policies, cultivate intellectual virtues, develop habits, choose where to focus our attention, consider whether our belief has enough support, etc., influences what we believe. And, we might think that our ability to do these things is due to our ability to recognize and respond to reasons.

Different accounts of responsiveness to reasons will highlight different features. For some, to be responsive to reasons is to identify and hold fixed the mechanism, faculty,

process, etc. causally responsible for the formation of the belief that p and see if the same belief would be formed in the light of new information in a sufficient number of cases.[116] For others, responsiveness to reasons turns on deep features of the individual such as epistemic virtues and vices.[117] But the key similarity is that our responsibility—or, for our purposes our competence—is grounded the ability to be motivated to believe by the norms that govern belief formation (acquisition and maintenance).

How is this different from the kind of control we have been discussing so far? In the first place, the norms governing responsiveness to reasons and by extension the features of ourselves that are subject to reasons—cognitive abilities, epistemic virtues, and so on—hold whether we can exercise direct voluntary control over them. Just as I can still be blamed for anger I have no control over, I can be blamed for sloppy thinking. This is true even when we have done all we can to avoid it. If I go to seminars, practice mindfulness, and meditate, I may still be blamed for becoming angry at slight provocation. Similarly, if I have studied and thought about a particular claim and believe it even though I ought not to, I can be evaluated negatively. In such a case, my control over my belief extends only so far. In fact, it is more apt to think of this kind of control as the ability to influence my beliefs.

Epistemic competence entails a host of different and varied types of evaluations of an individual. We are not subject only to deontological constraints—ought, obligated to, must, permitted to—and the corresponding evaluations in both our actions and beliefs. Rather, the kinds of evaluations targeted at us, and that we target at others, cover deep features of the individual herself. It is not simply that someone ought (not) to believe that p, but that some individuals, in believing that p, are stupid, ignorant, brilliant, careless, meticulous, open-minded, and so on. As such, our understanding of epistemic competence must

[116] See Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, Ch. 2 section IV, and Fischer, *My Way*, 2006: Ch. 3.
[117] Owens, *Reason Without Freedom*, chapters 7-8.

accommodate the rich normative landscape of evaluation for belief. To be the appropriate target of epistemic evaluation is to be subject to evaluation not just of what one believes, but of being a believer.[118]

To appreciate epistemic competence as being about what it is to be a believer subject to the norms that govern belief (formation/acquisition/ maintenance) is to appreciate the contextual and perhaps holistic way we evaluate others. This alone should show us that whatever constitutes epistemic competence cannot be a relatively straightforward feature like voluntary control. The mere ability to control our beliefs and our environment means nothing without knowing what to do and how to do it.[119] This is not to say that we do not have any ability to affect what we believe. In my arguments against voluntarism, I have intimated that what we think as control over what we believe is not control at all. Rather, we have an ability to influence our beliefs. We cannot voluntarily choose what we do (not) believe, but we can voluntarily engage in activities, adopt policies, and so on, that do lead to some belief or other.

It is tempting to think about influence as a way to ground epistemic evaluability, but we should resist that temptation.[120] And this for two reasons: on the one hand, because the norms that govern belief (formation) could hold absent what we do (that is, however much effort we put into changing our habits, developing a capacity, and so forth), the mere ability to influence our beliefs *may* not be necessary for competence; on the other, there are surely very many individuals who are able to influence what they believe who are exempt from

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[118] Contrary to some attempts to rescue deontological constraints for belief despite not having voluntary control, this is not simply to reinterpret those constraints as, say, role oughts (as Feldman, "Voluntary Belief" does). This view includes role oughts, proper deontological constraints (where appropriate), virtue constraints and others.

[119] Of course, no one thinks it does. But once we make explicit what it is to control something, we see that the mere ability to control something does not require awareness or sensitivity. Just because it is overwhelmingly the case that awareness, sensitivity, and know-how attend instances of control, it does not follow that those features are constitutive of it.

[120] See Alston *Beyond 'Justification,'* chapter 4 §iv.

(certain kinds of) appraisal. In this case, the ability to influence our beliefs is not sufficient. What I am suggesting here is that we must be careful to avoid the temptation to replace a control condition on reactive evaluability with a mere ability to influence how we believe. As I suggested above, the mere ability to influence belief is explanatorily inert without the corresponding knowledge of how to do so and why. I shall argue later that once properly understood within the context of the abilities to recognize and assess reasons to believe, the ability to influence belief is a part of epistemic competence; the ability to influence our beliefs is part of an integrated cognitive ability. To be clear, it is not just an ability to engage in activities that influence our beliefs that makes us the appropriate target of evaluation. Rather, it is because we have the ability to recognize norms and direct ourselves in response to them. In other words, the ability to influence our beliefs is part of being responsive to reasons, or as I shall eventually argue, the ability to influence our beliefs is partially constitutive of knowing how to know.

Conclusion

Before we begin to reflect critically on epistemic evaluability (and evaluation), we seem to have an intuition that being evaluable requires that we be in control of the belief; the degree of evaluability covaries with the amount of control we have. But this extremely coarse-grained way of looking at things begins to fall apart immediately on deeper scrutiny. We do not have this kind of control—which is fairly obvious—nor is it the case that even if we think this is not the kind of control implied by saying a belief was under our voluntary

control that to be epistemically competent one must be able to exercise *some* kind of control over belief.

So, the arguments in this chapter that belief is not under our voluntary control do not miss the mark. While it may be true that it is control that underwrites responsibility (or evaluability) for action, it is not so for belief. If we want an account of what grounds reactive *epistemic* evaluability, however, we must look elsewhere. So, if it is not control that underwrites doxastic evaluability, perhaps it is instead a feature that we mistakenly believe can only come with control, namely, a kind of awareness.

3. Doxastic Awareness and Epistemic Competence

In the last chapter, I intimated that rather than control underwriting the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes, it is some aspect that we mistakenly identify with, or think entails, control. While the ability to influence what we believe seems to be the natural replacement for doxastic control, I suggested unless we know how and why we would want to do so, the ability merely to influence belief is at best only one part of the story. Since fully exempt epistemic subjects influence their beliefs in myriad ways every day, if doxastic influence plays a role in epistemic competence it will not be quite so straight forward. It is not just the ability to influence our beliefs, but the ability to do so in the right way. But what is the right way to influence belief? I take it that epistemically competent individuals have the ability to influence their beliefs in ways that increase the probability of their beliefs being true. This is not to say they do influence their beliefs in these ways all the time or even a majority of the time, but rather to maintain that they have the ability to do so. The implication is that they are aware of what they are doing or that they know how to influence their beliefs.

Ultimately, I reject conscious awareness as the ground of evaluability since we might be the appropriate targets of reactive attitudes in cases of doxastic omission. However, this is

not to maintain that epistemic evaluability does not require any kind of awareness, but rather that the nature and object of that awareness is quite different from the intuitive candidates I discuss below. Yet, just as the investigation into the nature of doxastic control in the previous chapter yielded insights about the role of influence we have over our beliefs, the investigation and rejection of awareness will likewise yield some insights or clues for where to look for an account of competence. In particular, the aptness of evaluation in the case of doxastic omission suggests that the ground of evaluability—and therefore that which constitutes epistemic competence—must be a deep and stable feature of our cognition. A natural place to look for such features would be our cognitive virtues and abilities.

I begin in §3.1 by briefly discussing the nature and object(s) of doxastic awareness. If we suppose that an individual is epistemically competent on the grounds of some kind of doxastic awareness, we must clarify the nature and object of that awareness. Are we aware of the reasons for belief, the belief itself, the formation of the belief, or ourselves as belief forming subjects? I argue that awareness plays a crucial role in epistemic competence even though we need not be conscious of our reasons for belief, the faculty/capacity that formed the belief, or the belief itself, and that we may fail to be subject to evaluation even in cases where we are aware of such things. Although this gives the appearance that awareness is neither necessary nor sufficient for epistemic competence, I maintain this is to oversimplify the holistic character of belief formation. In §3.2, I examine two alternative accounts of an awareness condition on epistemic competence and suggest they provide clues to understanding strong intuitions about doxastic awareness. More exactly, I raise the possibility that epistemic competence is (at least partially) explained by structural features of our psychology, namely, intellectual capacities and abilities that make possible epistemic commitments and the recognition of norms.

These structural features of our psychology must provide resources to satisfy several desiderata if they are to do the work required to underwrite reactive evaluability. Specifically, they must be able to: explain apt evaluation in light of doxastic omissions, explain our ability to influence our beliefs, be present in all intellectually mature individuals, offer plausible explanations about evaluability and evaluation, suggest a relatively clear demarcation between competent and noncompetent individuals while recognizing the fact that there is no hard and fast line, and so on. The recent focus on cognitive abilities and virtues argued for by virtue epistemologists provides valuable resources in this regard. In §3.3, I shall argue that epistemic competence is constituted by cognitive abilities and virtues. To stop here would be to fail to answer the competence question, though. It is not enough to argue that cognitive abilities and virtues ground evaluability; I must also present a case for how they do so and which abilities are necessary (and sufficient), which is the task of chapters 5 and 6.

Before proceeding to investigate the nature and role of doxastic awareness in epistemic competence, I should like to make a methodological point. Just as with my discussion of doxastic control, part of my argument will trade on the fact that control and awareness come apart. Once we abstract awareness away from choice or control, we find that merely being aware of our beliefs, our reasons for belief, and so on is insufficient to explain epistemic competence. One might think all we need to do then is put control and awareness together in the account. Of course, this strategy cannot get off the ground since doxastic control is a myth. Nevertheless, the focus on conscious awareness divorced from control shall yield clearer insights than if we muddied the waters by including control as well. Consequently, the account of competence I develop later will provide a more nuanced role for awareness and, if not mythical doxastic control, then a commonplace but nevertheless more interesting doxastic influence.

3.1. Doxastic Awareness

As with control, there is an intuitive connection between responsibility and awareness. If an agent through no fault of her own is unaware of the rightness or wrongfulness of her action[121]—if we would be wrong to think she ought to have been aware of those features but through her own negligence was not—then there is a strong case to be made that she is exempt or absolved from responsibility. The same may be said of doxastic responsibility. If an agent failed to be aware of relevant epistemic features through no fault of her own, it seems at least uncharitable, if not wrong, of us to hold her responsible for forming (failing to form) the relevant belief. But the conditions for the *warranted ascription* of responsibility either for our actions or our beliefs are stricter than the *appropriateness* of ascriptions—evaluability—in general. The point generalizes to other kinds reactive attitudes as well. Since the latter attitudes could be apt, in general, even if they are not warranted for the specific belief, the conditions of epistemic competence may likewise be fulfilled even in the absence of awareness. So-called culpable omissions appear to lead us to the conclusion that awareness is not necessary for either competence or responsibility. This is, however, to dismiss the role of awareness in epistemic competence too quickly; just because we are not aware of the rightness or wrongfulness of a belief/action it does not follow that conscious awareness plays no part in the explanatory story. The task of this section is to examine the nature and objects of doxastic awareness and address whether some kind of awareness is sufficient and/or necessary for epistemic competence.

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[121] For simplicity, when characterizing the awareness requirement on responsibility or competence I shall use "right" and "wrong" and its cognates. In practice we use a much richer vocabulary when attributing responsibility. An action may be careless, thoughtful, rude, and so on. I take it the context will determine the appropriate kind of evaluation and use right and wrong only as general variable terms.

I shall suggest that even a minimal kind of non-reflective awareness of the belief, our reasons (evidence) for the belief, our belief-forming capacities, or even ourselves as believing agents—collectively referred to as epistemic awareness—is not sufficient to underwrite epistemic reactive attitudes. Moreover, the problem of doxastic omissions presents a powerful, though not complete, case against the necessity of epistemic awareness. If I could rightly be the subject of epistemic reactive attitudes in cases where I lack awareness, then it seems the only role it could play implicates a modal awareness requirement. For example, if I fail to be aware of, say, reasons for a belief that I *should* be (have been) aware of, then a case can be made that awareness is necessary, in some sense, to underwrite epistemic competence. Unfortunately, even this modal awareness requirement cannot adequately explain responsibility for omissions. Let us begin with the nature of epistemic awareness.

a. The nature and objects of epistemic awareness

In the preceding paragraphs, because I tried to highlight the parity of reasoning between responsibility for action and belief, I focused on the idea that doxastic responsibility and, even more generally, epistemic competence appears to require at least the possibility of reflective awareness on the *reasons and evidence* for (against) belief. But we should consider three other possible objects of awareness: *the belief itself, the belief-forming faculty or capacity, or ourselves as believing subjects.* The prevalence of culpable doxastic omissions shows that we can rightly be targeted with epistemic reactive attitudes even when we are not aware of the reasons and evidence for a belief, the belief itself, or the capacities productive of belief. Further, since awareness of each of these is possible without being epistemically competent, they fail to be sufficient as well.

Allow me to clarify the possible objects of awareness a bit more. If one wants to maintain that epistemic competence is constituted (wholly or in part) by consciousness awareness, she must first identify what the competent individual is aware of such that in being aware of it, she is competent. I suggested four possible objects of awareness. Consider the belief that the lunar landing was faked. If we think that Walter in believing that the lunar landing was faked is open to assessment on the basis of that belief because he was consciously aware of it, what does "it" refer to? Perhaps Walter is evaluable because he is aware of having the belief. In this way, we might say that Walter is evaluable because in being aware of the belief, he consciously endorses it.[122] Or perhaps we mean that Walter is evaluable because he is aware of the reasons on which he came to believe that the lunar landing was faked. Since he persists in his belief, it looks as if he consciously endorses those reasons. Or, we might think that Walter is evaluable because he is aware of the process(es) by which he came to believe it—i.e., consciously aware, for example, of the faculties or capacities, or that in believing as he does he must have manifested or exercised those capacities. Here, he consciously endorses the capacities he exercised or manifested in coming to believe the landing was faked. (There is one final object of awareness that bears mentioning. One might think that competence—i.e., being the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes—is constituted by self-awareness, or more precisely, awareness of one's self as a believer. It seems obvious that self-awareness is necessary for competence, but fairly vacuously so—we return to this below—but it is not at all clear why it would be sufficient; to put it bluntly, conscious awareness of ourselves as believers is impotent to effect any kind of influence on our belief acquisition or retention.) Now the advocate of

[122] One might object at this point by accusing me of being too simplistic. Awareness of the belief, capacities or reasons for belief need not be consciously endorsed. Rather, it is enough that one would endorse them if questioned about it. There is some plausibility to this, but ultimately, the problem of doxastic omissions which I discuss in §3.1b shall reveal difficulties with this approach.

conscious awareness might accept any combination of these objects of awareness to make her case. For now, let us turn to discussing more fully the nature of that awareness.

In a recent book, George Sher argues against what he calls the "searchlight view" of conscious awareness for moral responsibility. According to this view, "an agent's moral responsibility extends only as far as his awareness of what he is doing."[123] Of course, this does not imply that responsible action requires that one is aware of everything one is doing; rather, what is required is that one is aware of the morally or prudentially relevant features of the act. In essence, the searchlight view maintains that responsibility is found within the searchlight of conscious awareness. Just as the range and distance of an actual searchlight is limited, so too is the range and distance of our conscious awareness of an act limited. And, it is only those morally or prudentially relevant features of an act, illuminated by the searchlight of our consciousness, for which we can be responsible. Notice that "the view says not that we are responsible only for those features of our acts to which we are actively paying attention, but rather that we are responsible only for those features of which we are at least passively aware."[124] The argument can be applied to the focus of the present work *mutatis mutandis*; accordingly, advocates of such a view would maintain that a subject is epistemically accountable only for those features illuminated by the searchlight of his conscious awareness.

The prima facie intuitive plausibility of this view immediately falls apart once it is made explicit. Not only do I bear responsibility for things *I am* aware of, but I also bear responsibility for actions of which *I am not* aware. I might be fully to blame for an accident I caused due to negligence where I was not aware that in performing that action I caused the accident. For example, I might cause an accident by texting and driving because I was so

[123] Sher, *Who Knew?*, 4.
[124] *Ibid*, 6.

engrossed in the text message that I was completely unaware of the road and nearby drivers. It is important, then, to determine the kind of awareness we must have, if any, in order to be responsible, keeping in mind that the conditions of doxastic responsibility, and to a greater extent epistemic evaluability, differ from conditions of responsibility for action.

If I can be evaluable for actions where I am not aware either that I am doing them or that they are right (wrong), then perhaps my evaluability lies in the fact that I *should* have been aware or that I was aware I was doing something that could very easily cause such an accident. In other words, my evaluability seems to lie either in a conscious awareness that an action is wrong, say, or trace back to a consciously chosen action that brought about the current wrong action. We need not enter in discussion of convoluted action-sequence chains to find issues with thinking about awareness and evaluability along these lines. If I forget to pick my wife up at the metro station because it slipped my mind, her frustration or anger or sadness at my carelessness is apt,[125] assuming carelessness is the cause and not, e.g., a head injury. I may have done nothing to forget this, and yet I bear responsibility for it. It will not do to maintain that my responsibility lies in my failure to cultivate a way to remember such things or a failure to cultivate care for my wife's wellbeing. Unless every act of carelessness such as this can be traced to a conscious decision to not cultivate certain habits or attitudes, then responsibility ascriptions, as well as more general evaluations, are apt even in cases where there is no initiating conscious choice that leads to the present wrong act. At the very least, such a response combined with the searchlight view fails to explain the appropriateness of my wife's attitude.

Suppose that my responsibility in this case involves awareness in some way. What way could that be? It is not conscious awareness of the wrongfulness of the action since I am, *ex*

[125] Angela Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes," discusses a similar case involving forgetting a dear friend's birthday.

hypothesi, not aware of the act itself and hence of its wrongfulness; it is as Sher says, "a mere non-event."[126] It is likewise not awareness of an action that brought about the forgetting. Nor is it even an awareness of the fact that a conscious action could have resulted in my forgetting my wife at the Metro. It seems that if awareness plays any role at all here it is in the fact that upon realizing that I forgot to pick up my wife I would recognize this as a failure on my part and that upon recognizing this I should take steps to make sure, insofar as possible, that I am not so careless in the future; when I recognize a failing in me as a failing and do not take steps to become better, I am accountable for such negligence.[127] In other words, it is in the ability to recognize and be moved by relevant norms. So, responsibility requires at least the awareness of the wrongfulness of an action *when that action is brought to my attention*, the recognition that such an action is or would be wrong, or perhaps more weakly an awareness of the relevant norms that would lead me to recognize the action as wrong once I adequately understood it.

What seems to be required is a kind of in-principle awareness; upon reflection, I would or at least could be aware that what I was doing was wrong, and that nothing blocks my ability to exercise that capacity, e.g., such as unconsciousness. What follows from this is that my inattention at the moment exempts me only if I lack this capacity globally or this *capacity* is undermined temporarily and locally. This gets tangled up with modal and normative issues. To suggest that upon reflection I would be aware is to maintain that had I been more careful I would have noticed certain features of the belief/action, including features of myself—e.g., that I am prone to forgetfulness or that I am not well enough informed to decide—which made it wrong. And why would this matter unless I *should* have been aware and thus *could* have been aware of those features? Still, even if we require only this less demanding form of

[126] Sher, *Who Knew*, 85.
[127] Thanks to Hilary Bok for suggesting this clarification.

awareness, we may be evaluable in cases where the searchlight of our awareness failed to illuminate features it should have. By parity of reasoning one could argue that we are evaluable based on beliefs just in case we are either aware of the reasons and evidence for (against) them—including features about ourselves—or we should have been aware of the reasons and evidence for (against) them.[128]

If we extend this to broader epistemic reactive attitudes, we find similar reasoning. We might argue that one's thinking is careless only when one has been or (at least) should have been aware of the reasons and evidence for (against) a claim.[129] This would leave us with a disjunctive condition. Epistemic competence requires either that one is aware of the rightness (wrongness) of one's belief or that she should have been. The disjunctive understanding of the awareness condition, if right, maintains that awareness is necessary to underwrite epistemic competence. But there is no such requirement since one could fail to be aware in relevant ways and yet be the appropriate target of reactive attitudes. To see why we need to understand what "should" means when we say that an individual is evaluable for a belief only if she was aware or should have been aware of the rightness or wrongfulness of it.

George Sher offers four different interpretations of what it means that an individual is responsible for an act only if she should have been aware of its rightness or wrongfulness. We can apply his interpretations to epistemic evaluability. We might mean that: (a) there is some sort of relation (deductive, probabilistic, or evidential) between something that the

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[128] There is a notable exception to the analogy from accountability for action, however. Action requires control. So an agent is responsible for an action if and only if she was (could have been) aware of the rightness or wrongfulness of her action and chose to act on (disregard) it. There is no such control condition on epistemic accountability; I am not made aware of the reasons and evidence for a belief which I then subsequently *decide* to believe. In being made aware of those reasons and that evidence my belief-forming capacities or cognitive abilities take over and produce the belief.

[129] We should not be confused by our evaluations that appear to contradict this idea. Sometimes we evaluate someone's thinking as careless for pedagogical reasons. The point here is not to target them with reactive attitudes, but to correct and teach them.

individual believes and the foolishness or wrongness of the belief; (b) that the individual failed to realize the reasons and evidence that, in the situation, would have shown the belief to be wrong or foolish; (c) the individual fell below an applicable standard by failing to realize those reasons; (d) or, she fell below an applicable standard by failing to do something that would have led her to realize the reasons that show her belief is wrong or foolish.[130] The problem, Sher argues, is that none of these connect the individual to the failure to believe in the right way. The fact of the abstract relations between a belief's wrongness and the reasons for thinking it wrong in (a) do not explain how those relations can underwrite evaluability unless the individual should have been aware either that there are such relations between what the individual believes and the wrongness of foolishness of the new belief, or that something the individual believes makes the new belief wrong or foolish. But this is to introduce the problematic "should" all over again. There is a similar difficulty with (b). It does no good to attempt to understand the awareness condition by appeal to what the individual should have done if that explanation maintains that the individual failed to realize the reasons that showed the belief is wrong. Again, we have reintroduced the problem of awareness at the level of the reasons for thinking the belief was wrong. Since I am attempting to give an account of competence understood as that which underwrites the appropriateness of reactive attitudes, (c) and (d) provide no help either.

To suggest that we understand "should have been aware" as implicating the failure to meet a standard is to suggest, obliquely, that we understand competence—i.e., the applicability of reactive attitudes when failing to meet those standards—as requiring that one meets standards. An example will clarify this. Recall Susan whose bias towards Sea World causes her to fail to view the documentary *Blackfish* objectively. If Susan is unaware of her

[130] See Sher, *Who Knew?*, ch. 5

epistemic faults, it is natural to suggest that she is, nevertheless, evaluable because she should be aware of them. The present suggestion is that the appropriateness of our reactive attitudes towards Susan is grounded in the idea that either she fell below an applicable standard by failing to realize that she was not viewing the film objectively or that she fell below some applicable standard in failing to do something to realize this. How could this possibly illuminate epistemic competence? Our competence could not be constituted by an awareness of this kind since it already assumes competence in the very notion of *applicable* standards. We already know Susan is evaluable based on her epistemic fault because she is competent. We now want an explanation as to how she could be evaluable for a belief—that *Blackfish* is misleading and defamatory—precisely because she is unaware she has fallen below an applicable standard.

Susan is evaluable not due to awareness (whether occurrent awareness of the reasons and evidence for a belief) or a requirement that she should have been aware, but rather because of a general *ability* to recognize reasons for (against) belief, an ability to "justify what one says."[131] This latter point brings to light the importance of norm recognition. To suggest that I could have been aware of the rightness or wrongness of a belief or the reasons for it is to suggest that I could recognize when belief or the reasons for it are good (bad). The arguments that follow provide insight into the role of awareness in epistemic competence, which leaves us with something that retains the spirit of the modal condition of awareness—i.e., epistemic evaluability requires, at least, that one should have been aware of the reasons and evidence for a claim—but moves from the awareness of reasons and evidence to a recognition of norms made possible by the individual's cognitive abilities.

[131] Sellars, *Empiricism*, §36.

b. Epistemic omissions and the necessity of awareness

Sometimes epistemic reactive attitudes are appropriate even in cases where the subject was not aware they (failed to) believe(d) something they should (not) have. Call this the problem of (accountable) epistemic omissions. Put most simply, the problem of epistemic omissions maintains that since a subject is the appropriate target of reactive attitudes when due to her negligence she fails to be aware of something she should have (and thus could have) been aware of, doxastic awareness is not necessary to underwrite those attitudes. When it comes to awareness of our beliefs and reasons, there are corresponding cases of appropriate reactive attitudes without awareness. When it comes to awareness of our belief-forming capacities or ourselves as believing subjects, we find either the awareness component is vacuous or not broad enough. Let us take each object of awareness in turn.

Fairly obviously, I might have a belief I am unaware I should not have and be subject to evaluation based on it. For example, recall Joe the Fox News-loving climate science denier. We could think (rightly) that Joe is rather careless (or perhaps something stronger) for his belief even if we find out that Joe is not aware of any good reasons not to believe what he does. Alternatively, we could think (rightly) that Joe is rather careless (or perhaps something stronger) for his refraining from believing something he should believe even if we find out that he is not aware of any good reasons not to refrain. And similarly, for his *failure* to reject a belief he is not aware he should reject or for his *failure* to form a belief that he is not aware he should form. There are, then, four ways in which one can be evaluable for culpable epistemic omissions. In addition, there are any combinations of the object of awareness as well. For example, one might be evaluable for thinking reasons *r* are good reasons to believe that *p* even if one is unaware that one is cognitively "blind" to the fact that *r* are not good reasons. Here one object of awareness, namely, reasons *r* to believe that *p*, subject one to

evaluation even though one is unaware of the fact that another object of awareness, namely one's cognitive capacities/faculties, are causing one to be unjustifiably biased. Perhaps one's fears about one's own economic situation cause one to be unable to recognize that *r* are in actuality bad reasons to believe that *p*. The point is there are many ways one can commit epistemic omissions. In order to examine whether some kind of awareness is necessary for epistemic competence, we need not examine each possible combination, however. We need only construct the least demanding cases—i.e., cases with the least demand for conscious awareness, or those with the least possibility of smuggling in conscious awareness—to determine what role, if any, conscious awareness plays in underwriting epistemic reactive attitudes.

Now, the least demanding general type of epistemic omission is the double failure: the failure to believe because of the lack of awareness of different objects of epistemic awareness. This also happens to be the most difficult kind of case to explain why someone might be evaluable for an omission. To see why, we need only recognize that the double failure is the only kind of omission where there is a total non-event. Not only is there no belief formed, hence no belief-forming act, there is no awareness of one's not forming the belief. If it can be shown that we are or can be evaluated based on a double-failure omission, then it follows that conscious awareness—at least occurrent conscious awareness—is not necessary for epistemic competence. I shall present three cases of apt evaluability for a double failure corresponding to each of the proposed objects of epistemic awareness: reasons for belief, the belief itself, and belief-forming capacities/faculties. Fairly obviously, if one lacks all self-awareness, then reactive attitudes would be inapt, but we shall return to the importance of this below.

Examination of the three types of double-failure omissions points us towards the idea that the kind of awareness required to be apt targets of reactive attitudes is the kind present in knowing how to do something. Indeed, since reactive attitudes are directed at individuals, they target deep features of the individual; features present even when an individual is guilty of an omission, especially those expressed or manifest in one's abilities.

The first kind of double-failure omission we shall look at involves failing to believe something because one is unaware of the reasons to believe it.

> 1) **Reasons Double-Failure**: Jon has an important upcoming job interview. He arrives at the original time the interview was set but comes to find out the time was pushed up and he missed it. A week prior he received an email with the updated time but never read it. So, Jon fails to revise his original belief and in so doing fails to believe the meeting is earlier than originally scheduled because he is unaware of the reasons to believe it, viz., that it was rescheduled. It seems perfectly reasonable for his prospective employers to hold this against him.

There are ways to fill out the details such that Jon is excused, absolved, or exempt from any negative assessments his prospective employers may direct at him. Suppose Jon was out of the country, deep in the jungle away from any internet connection and only arrived back in town the morning of the interview. In this case, his failure to know the new time is excused. Or, suppose Jon was in an accident and was in a coma for the past week. He fully recovered only the day before the interview and was in medical tests all day. In this case, the prospective employers' evaluations misfire, they are directed at an individual who is absolved—i.e. wholly excused—from such attitudes. However, for our purposes let us say that Jon was perfectly capable of checking his email but simply did not do so. So, Jon had a reasonable amount of time to ensure that he knew the appropriate time of the meeting and simply failed to do so. Here, his employers are entitled to count this against him. It would rightly cause them to think that he may likewise miss important deadlines or further meetings.

We must be careful not to conclude that awareness plays no role, however. If Jon were wholly unaware he would be exempt from reactive attitudes as in the case where he was in a coma. It seems, then, that Jon's lack of awareness of the reasons to believe the meeting time changed does not imply a complete lack of awareness. In particular, we would expect that given the importance of the interview that Jon would be more careful and confirm his appointment. That he did not indicates a careless attitude that plausibly carries over to other activities. In other words, since Jon is aware that the meeting is important he should have been more careful. What this case does show is that awareness of the particular reasons for a belief is not required to underwrite the aptness of reactive attitudes. A more general awareness of the activity or its importance does appear to be necessary. This amounts to awareness of norms or at least normative features of the situation. We can garner similar lessons from cases of *belief* double-failure.

In cases of *belief* double-failure, one may be unaware that another belief one has, q, causes one to fail to believe something else, p. For example, one might be unaware that one believes so strongly that a person is good that it makes them incapable of believing anything bad about that person.

> 2) **Belief Double-Failure**: Joe implicitly believes whatever Fox News reports. As a result, he fails to believe that humans are causing climate change. In fact, he believes the contrary that humans are not causing climate change and the temperature and weather fluctuations are the result of a solar cycle. His implicit trust in Fox News causes him to be blind to any contrary evidence. If pressed, Joe would claim to be well informed and have fair and balanced opinions about the matter. He would report what he has heard on Fox News all the while thinking he was reasonable. He might even think that he does not trust Fox News in everything but attempts to get a well-rounded perspective. In fact, he does not look anywhere but Fox News for his information, including his information about climate change.[132]

[132] To modify this case make his lack of awareness be about contrary views or about his failure to recognize the entailment from his complete trust in Fox News to the climate change belief.

As with reason double-failure there are ways to fill in the details where Joe would be excused, absolved, or exempt. But surely there are details that would implicate his openness to appraisal as well. Additionally, the lesson we should learn from this case is that the nature and the object of awareness need to be made clearer. If we think that responsibility and thus competence requires conscious awareness either of the belief one does not have (which would be very odd) or, at least, of the unknowingly undermining belief, then this case presents a deep problem for the advocate of awareness as constituting competence. If, however, we think that there is some kind of awareness involved even if it need not be about the target belief or undermining belief, then this case helps us to illuminate the nature and object of *that* awareness. Indeed, a picture is emerging of the nature and object of that awareness which suggests a kind of awareness of, not what we believe or do, but *how* we believe or act.

This picture highlights the very evaluations and reactive attitudes we are trying to explain. When we evaluate individuals based on their beliefs or actions, our principal target is not the act or belief, but the agent. The problem with Jon in the first case is that *he* is careless about important matters and the attitudes directed at him reflect this. Likewise, the problem with Joe is not that he does or does not *believe* that humans are causing climate change; after all, there may be some highly knowledgeable scientists that also believe this. Rather, he shows himself, in the way he goes about acquiring/maintaining beliefs, to be closed-minded, dogmatic, and blinkered. Nevertheless, he has a kind of epistemic awareness whose object is how to go about believing—a kind that, at least partially, constitutes his knowing how to acquire/maintain beliefs—and this implicates the aptness of the reactive attitudes we direct at him.

The final way we might commit a double-failure omission is when our lack of awareness of our faculties or capacities—or, more likely, a lack of awareness of the limitations of our faculties or capacities—can cause us to fail to believe something. Whether the lack of belief is the result of the inadequacies or limitations of cognitive faculties and capacities or a lack of awareness of the affect of conative faculties and abilities on cognitive faculties, capacities, and abilities, our ground-level reactive attitudes may be appropriate.

> 3) **Faculty Double-Failure**: Steve fails to believe that texting and driving is dangerous. He happily texts and drives most days whether he is on the highway or sitting at a stoplight. He is completely unaware of inattentional blindness and defends his ability by claiming that he never looks down at his phone but only keeps it in line of sight with the road.[133]

Steve's lack of awareness about inattentional blindness keeps him from seeing the danger in texting and driving. Since he thinks that if his eyes are directed at the road, then he sees the road, he believes that there is no problem with his texting and driving. In this case, a limitation in his perceptual capacity of which he himself is unaware causes him to fail to believe that texting and driving is unsafe. As with the previous two examples, his lack of awareness does not excuse, absolve, or exempt him from reactive attitudes. The importance of being safe not just for oneself but for the other drivers on the road demands that Steve show more attention. The fact that he shows himself to be careless is both epistemically and morally problematic.

Again, the attitudes we direct at Steve are not just about the belief or lack thereof; we do not direct reactive attitudes at abstracta like beliefs, or propositions, we direct them at the

[133] One way of filling out the details of this case reveals it to be another instance of belief double-failure. For example, perhaps Steve is unaware of his tacit belief about his own driving skill that causes him to not believe that texting and driving is dangerous, or, that *his* texting and driving is dangerous. This is plausible, but so is the case where his lack of awareness concerning his cognitive limitations causes him not to believe that texting and driving is dangerous.

individuals who have them. We do so because something about *them* explains why they believe as they do. Like Joe in the second case, Steve shows himself to be aware of norms governing belief and action. But this case highlights also the fact that Steve is aware, in some sense, of his abilities. For example, he is aware that holding beliefs requires that we give reasons for them (evinced in the defense of his practice). Additionally, he is aware that certain activities and actions, e.g., driving, requires that we exercise certain abilities, e.g., paying attention to the road instead of looking away from it.

What is not yet clear from these examples is what norms and abilities we must be aware of in order to be epistemically competent.[134] Since we are concerned with basic epistemic competence, the norms and abilities must be general enough that all normally functioning adults have them. It is implausible, in the extreme, that normally functioning adults—possessors of mature human knowledge—are wholly unaware of basic norms governing belief formation or of the abilities one must manifest/exercise in order to acquire beliefs in accordance with those norms. Awareness of some kind, then, appears to be required to be the appropriate targets of reactive attitudes, but not awareness of the reasons, belief, or faculty.

This discussion of doxastic omissions has raised three central clues to understanding epistemic competence. First, fundamentally, epistemic evaluation is directed at epistemic subjects. When we say things like, "that's a stupid thing to believe," this is shorthand for, "in believing that, you are acting/being stupid" (in some sense). Second, when we target epistemic subjects with reactive attitudes, we implicate either how they went about coming to believe as they do or their understanding or awareness of how one should go about forming

[134] We shall return to this in chapter five and six where I argue that cognitive abilities are capacities that we exercise guidance control over and that the ability to recognize, attend to and assess reasons for belief—justifying reasons—constitutes epistemic competence.

beliefs—i.e., we implicate their understanding or awareness (or lack thereof) of belief norms. Third, forming beliefs is an activity brought about by the exercise or manifestation of abilities. I shall return to this below. For now, I need to determine whether awareness is sufficient for competence.

c. Is epistemic awareness sufficient for competence?

The case against the sufficiency of awareness is rather straightforward. Conscious awareness—be it reflective or non-reflective—of the reasons for belief, the belief itself, or the faculties or capacities productive of belief could not be sufficient for epistemic competence since that awareness is wholly passive. As I intimated in chapter 2, I shall argue that the ability to influence our beliefs is partially constitutive of epistemic competence. Neither could awareness of the norms that govern belief formation nor awareness of the cognitive abilities one exercises/manifests when forming beliefs be sufficient for the same reason. As such, it could not connect the believer to the belief (or mere awareness could not explain the lack of belief in the case of omissions). Consider an analogy with moral attributability. Suppose Gary suffers from Alien Hand Syndrome—a condition where one's hand does things that the individual cannot stop. Upon meeting his new boss, Gary attempts to shake his hand only to find that instead his "alien" hand is slapping the new boss across the face. Individuals who suffer from alien-hand syndrome are fully aware of what that hand is doing, they are simply unable to do anything about it.

In the doxastic realm, we do not target individuals with reactive attitudes on the basis of mere sensory beliefs. In fact, mere sensory beliefs appear to be the focus of impersonal

assessment only. While someone may be judged on the way they have come to have poor vision, for example by staring at the sun because they believed it would make their eyes stronger, the individual is not negatively assessed for seeing as they do, now that they have poor eyesight. This is true even if the individual is wholly aware of their sensations, the reasons for believing something, or the belief itself.[135]

Requiring that individuals be aware of the reasons for belief, the belief, or belief-forming capacities in order to be epistemically competent is vacuous if it is not coupled with a way of doing something. The mere idle observance of the manifestation of capacities and the subsequent beliefs that are formed could not make us the appropriate subject of reactive attitudes. We would be no more than passive receptors of information. But we are active knowers. Beliefs are something we acquire, use, justify, and correct. If we could do no more than monitor the coming and going of our beliefs, there is no reason to think we should be subject to anything more than the objective evaluations of systems.

Let us take stock of the argument so far. Doxastic control is neither necessary nor sufficient to underwrite epistemic evaluability. This conclusion led to the idea that perhaps there is another feature that constitutes competence that is mistakenly thought to entail control. The most promising candidate appears to be conscious awareness. Yet, upon scrutiny, if awareness plays a role in a theory of epistemic competence it does not do so in a straightforwardly obvious way. The fact that we can rightly be targeted with reactive attitudes in the case of doxastic omissions shows us that we need not be aware of the reasons for the belief, the belief itself, nor even the faculties that produce or form the belief. What we are aware of is the norms that govern belief formation and perhaps the abilities we manifest when attempting to satisfy those norms. We are appropriately targeted with reactive attitudes

[135] Sometimes the stakes affect assessment. A spy might be assessed negatively for reporting seeing a red square and thus aborting the mission. But ordinarily, simple perception is not a basis of assessment of the individual.

in the case of omissions because we neglect to use our cognitive abilities to satisfy norms that we should, and hence could, satisfy.

This last point is important. It suggests that once we recognize our failing, we would do something to correct it. There is a de dicto/de re ambiguity here that proves instructive.[136] Consider Joe, the Fox News devotee. He might recognize that he has some epistemic failing without recognizing, specifically, any epistemic failing he has. In much the same way, we recognize that we have many false beliefs without recognizing, specifically, which of our beliefs are false. Once we recognize an epistemic failing as an epistemic failing, rather than just not as efficient, say, we would do something to correct it. Presumably, since Joe believes the way he gets his news is "fair and balanced" he would not recognize he is blinkered in his consumption of the news, he does not recognize this failing *as a* failing. He may recognize, in general, that he has some epistemic faults and yet persist in the particularly egregious fault of blindly trusting Fox News. It is in the ability to recognize that he has some epistemic failings—has not adequately satisfied the norms of belief acquisition/maintenance—where we find grounds to appropriately target Joe with epistemic reactive attitudes. For this suggests a general ability to adjust his beliefs or belief forming/maintaining practices. Yet, if the occurrent awareness of our epistemic faults is not required, how can we make sense of our openness to reactive attitudes in light of this general recognitional ability? Two recent accounts of responsibility for action offer alternatives that provide insight into the epistemic competence question with regard to the role that awareness may play.

[136] Thanks to Michael Williams to pointing this out.

3.2. Alternatives to Awareness

My purpose in this section is to glean important lessons from two alternative accounts of responsibility without awareness: George Sher's *structural-normative* account and Angela Smith's *rational relations* account. While I ultimately find each of these views lacking for my purposes, there are nevertheless important features of these views which shall point us in right direction for an account of general epistemic competence.

According to Sher, responsibility in cases where an agent was unaware of the morally or prudentially relevant features of her action is explained by that agent's constituent psychology—e.g., attitudes, desires, dispositions, and commitments that make the agent who she is. Roughly, the failure to recognize the morally or prudentially relevant features of that action falls below an applicable standard and that failure is caused by the relevant psychological properties of the agent. This structural-normative account points to deep features of the agent, features that (partially) constitute who she is. By contrast, Angela Smith argues that responsibility is explained by the relation between one's evaluative judgments and commitments and one's attitudes, dispositions, and traits. Her rational relations account points to the importance of commitment, judgment, and norm recognition.

There is an important difference between our goals. Sher's focus is on the responsibility for action and he wants to know how responsibility ascriptions—accountability ascriptions—are justified. Since my project is to understand epistemic evaluability and thus competence, unlike Sher, I do not assume that an agent is already the appropriate target of reactive attitudes in general. In this way, my goals are more aligned with Smith's. The sense of responsibility she wants to understand is moral attributability—what makes someone the

appropriate target of moral reactive attitudes—which is the moral analogue to epistemic evaluability. Despite these important differences I shall eventually argue (in chapters 5 & 6) that the structural features of one's constituent psychology—in particular, one's cognitive abilities—make possible the judgments and commitments that Smith avers. However, Sher's structural-normative view is too shallow for my purposes. His requirement of the applicability of normative standards assumes precisely what I want to explain.

a. Sher's Structural-Normative Account

Once we make explicit the idea that responsibility requires conscious awareness of the rightness or wrongfulness of an action, we see that we must immediately reject it since many of our common, ground level evaluations of others often involve features of the act of which the agent was unaware. The same may said for evaluations and appraisals that do not imply responsibility. We might think that individuals are just as susceptible to, e.g., aretaic appraisals though they are unaware of the features of the act that render those kinds of appraisals apt. It is often precisely the individual that is wholly unaware how selfish he is that is judged to be most selfish. In the epistemic realm, we aptly evaluate conspiracy theorists as foolish even though they may be unaware of why belief in the conspiracy is foolish. So, Sher's arguments extend to other (perhaps all) person-level evaluations. We have also seen that individuals are aptly evaluated in cases where the present lack of awareness does not trace back to a conscious choice or act.[137]

[137] In order to strengthen his arguments, Sher attempts to argue for an awareness requirement by appeal to the idea that responsibility is a practical concept implicating the first-personal nature of deliberation, or the concept of fairness (*Who Knew?*, chs. 3-4). Neither attempt succeeds. On the one hand, we often hold people (even ourselves) responsible for acts the features of which they (we) were unaware. On the other hand, the notion of fairness that implicates searchlight awareness involves the deliberative perspective that would require that our

As an alternative, Sher proposes the following disjunctive account of the epistemic condition of responsibility:

> When someone performs an act in a way that satisfies the voluntariness condition, and when he also satisfies any other conditions for responsibility that are independent of the epistemic condition, he is responsible for his act's morally or prudentially relevant feature if, but only if, he either:
>
> (1) is consciously aware that the act has that feature (i.e., is wrong or foolish or right or prudent) when he performs it; or else
>
> (2) is unaware that the act is wrong or foolish despite having evidence for its wrongness or foolishness his failure to recognize which
>
> (a) falls below some applicable standard, and
>
> (b) is caused by the interaction of some combination of his constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits; or else
>
> (3) is unaware that the act is right or prudent despite having made enough cognitive contact with the evidence for its rightness or prudence to enable him to perform the act on that basis.[138]

The first and third disjunct do not concern us. Against the first disjunct, I have already argued against the claim that conscious awareness of our beliefs, the reasons for them, of the faculties or states that produce them is not required for reactive evaluability. We can safely leave aside the third disjunct because positive reactive attitudes are less troubling to explain than negative reactive attitudes. So let us focus on the second disjunct. I call Sher's account of the epistemic condition on responsibility structural-normative because it maintains that one might be responsible for an act the moral or prudential features of which one is unaware by failing to meet the normative evidential standard because of constitutive and structural properties of one's psychology. In essence, (2) is meant to supplant the

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holding someone responsible must imaginatively reconstruct the perspective of the responsible agent. But, appeal to deliberation cannot overcome the fact that we hold people responsible from a third-person perspective.

[138] *Who Knew?*, 143.

intuitive idea that one is responsible without being consciously aware in cases where one should have been aware.[139]

In the present context, since a structural-normative account would presuppose the applicability of norms, which is precisely what I am attempting to account for, we must eschew the normative component in favor of a purely structural account of competence.[140]

> **S-competence:** A subject S is epistemically competent iff she is capable of meeting epistemic norms due to the interaction of some combination of her constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits. Alternatively, since reactive attitudes are apt when epistemic norms apply, S is competent iff she is capable of meeting those norms due to the interactions of some combination of her constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits.

This appears to be exactly what epistemic competence is, viz., the ability to satisfy epistemic norms. However, as stated it is hopelessly vague. Much more needs to be said about: (i) the interaction of the constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits; (ii) which combinations of one's constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits are relevant; (iii) the nature of the constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits, and (iv) which norms are relevant. Further, is the mere capability of meeting the relevant norms sufficient or must one also, in some sense, be aware that they are meeting those norms, and thus be aware of the norms themselves?

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[139] Sher canvasses some plausible interpretations of the counterfactual awareness claim, but rejects all of them as either not adequately connecting the act to the agent in such a way as to warrant responsibility or as failing our intuitive judgments. See "section" 3.1a above and *Who Knew?,* chapter 5.

[140] If we were to keep the normative component the account would look like this:

> **S-N Competence**: A subject S is epistemically competent iff epistemic norms are applicable and whether S is capable of meeting those norms by the interaction of some combination of his constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits.

Recall Sher's characterization of the epistemic condition on responsibility is only a necessary condition. In addition, to be responsible for action requires the choice of the action—i.e., a control condition. So, S-N competence differs from Sher's account by being necessary and sufficient; there is no control condition for doxastic responsibility. Moreover, as it stands S-N Competence begs the question. The purpose of this work is to understand the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes. In other words, my goal is to explain the applicability of epistemic norms; once an individual is subject and responsive to those norms she is the appropriate target of evaluation. This leaves us with a purely structural account of epistemic competence.

Often such recognition has to do with recognition of violating those norms rather than recognition of satisfying them. If so, then Sher's arguments against awareness fail. Since in order to be accountable for our actions those actions must be attributable to us—in order to be the warranted targets of responsibility ascriptions, we must first be the *appropriate* targets of responsibility ascriptions—awareness is required for responsibility. Sher's mistake lies in the depth of his analysis. This is true even in cases of omission.

Recall the aptness of the attitudes towards Jon for missing the important interview. It would be right to conclude according to Sher's view that Jon's lack of awareness of the time change neither absolves—i.e., wholly excuses him—nor mitigates the evaluations directed at him—i.e., partially excuses him—from those attitudes. It does not follow from this that one can be subject to those attitudes with no awareness, though. Suppose we modify the case so that Jon's lack of awareness is due not to carelessness but to not understanding norms of punctuality. Perhaps he was raised in a culture where punctuality is not valued at all and only last week arrived in the United States. What explains the appropriateness of the attitudes in the one case and not the other is precisely the awareness of relevant norms. Additionally, we might easily imagine cases where the relevant object of awareness is the cognitive ability (abilities) one manifests/exercises. Joe, the climate science denier, may be aware that he does not understand the various arguments on either side—is aware that he lacks the ability to understand them—and yet persists in his belief, even if he is unaware that he should not do so.[141]

[141] In chapter 5 I shall argue that cognitive capacities become abilities if and only if one owns those capacities—roughly, sees oneself as exercising or manifesting that capacity or doing something that requires that the capacity is exercised or manifest—and the exercise or manifestation of that capacity is responsive to reasons. The important point is that the ownership condition has a kind of built-in awareness. This is importantly different from the ways we have been discussing awareness in this chapter, however, since the object of awareness is not the belief, reasons for the belief, or faculty that produces it. Rather, it is an ownership of certain kinds of cognitive abilities—viz., the ability to recognize, assess, and believe for justifying reasons.

It is also important to note that one's awareness of one's context affects which abilities one ought to manifest. Because exercising some and not other cognitive abilities requires more effort, we often must determine (quite quickly) whether we need to go to the trouble. My efforts to recall the color of the amazing dog that dialed 9-1-1 because his owner was in trouble are not nearly as important as recalling the arguments marshaled against environmental regulation. To be sure, in some contexts, the former bears no importance whatsoever. The relative importance of the stakes greatly affects which cognitive abilities one exercises/manifests. It is because one does recognize that being careless in one's thought and action leads to wrong beliefs and actions that the present lack of awareness about the wrongfulness of an action (because one is not thinking about it or is momentarily distracted) does not exempt or excuse. If we did not or could not—i.e., through no amount of reasoning and attaining of new information—recognize that a belief or action was wrong, we would not be evaluable based on that belief or action. And if we cannot be evaluable based on a belief or action we cannot be accountable for it. As we saw above, we must at least be aware of the relevant norms or cognitive abilities in some sense for us to be subject to the reactive attitudes directed at us.

There is an important lesson to glean from Sher's structural-normative account, nevertheless. Of particular interest is Sher's focus on constitutive attitudes, dispositions, and traits. In chapter six I shall argue that epistemic competence is explained by certain of our cognitive abilities. In so doing I shall be advocating for a kind of structural position as well. Specifically, I maintain that when one has the ability to recognize, attend to, and assess justifying reasons for belief one is epistemically competent. Sher and I differ in two crucial respects, however. First, I think that some of an individual's constitutive psychology, in particular the ability to recognize, attend to, and assess justifying reasons, explains the

applicability of the norms. In coming to be able to govern our belief formation/maintenance in accordance with epistemic norms those norms—and the reactive attitudes appropriate to satisfying and failing to meet those norms—become applicable. Second, I think cognitive abilities are capacities that an individual owns by being able to exercise guidance control over them. This entails seeing oneself (in a sense to be articulated in chapter 5) as exercising those abilities and thus taking responsibility (in a sense to be articulated in chapter 5) for them. Thus, competence requires cognitive abilities which are nothing more than cognitive capacities that the subject is aware of. In this way, competent subjects are connected to their beliefs (or lack thereof) via their cognitive abilities. Let us briefly discuss one more alternative account of epistemic awareness.

b. Smith's Rational Relations View

Like Sher, Angela Smith thinks that awareness of the rightness or wrongfulness of an action is not necessary for responsibility. Unlike Sher she intends to account for moral attributability—understood as being rationally accessible to certain kinds of attitudes and judgments—what I have called competence. According to Smith, what underwrites moral attributability is that one's evaluative judgments or commitments are rationally related to one's attitudes, dispositions, and traits. In consequence, a subject is rightly targeted with reactive attitudes even for unreflective patterns of behavior that express those commitments or manifest those dispositions or traits. I shall briefly examine Smith's view and suggest that it brings to light the importance of judgment and commitment. To reiterate, my purpose is to glean from Smith's view clues as to where to look for an account of basic epistemic competence.

We need to account for a wide range of thought and behavior since we are appropriately targeted with reactive attitudes not only for *acts* of omission, but also for general lack of care, thoughtfulness, or attention. According to Smith:

> "When we praise or criticize someone for an attitude … it seems we are responding to certain judgments of the person which we take to be implicit in that attitude, judgments for which we consider her to be directly morally answerable."[142]

And:

> "a mental state is attributable to a person in the way that is required in order for it to be a basis for moral appraisal if that state is rationally connected in … relevant ways to her underlying evaluative judgment."[143]

Importantly, by judgment she means only general dispositions or "tendencies to regard certain things as having evaluative significance."[144] Since many of our beliefs, intentions, desires, etc., arise spontaneously, what accounts for the aptness of evaluation based on them cannot require conscious choice.[145] Rather, the attitudes, beliefs, intentions, etc., we have express deeper commitments and judgments, often commitments and judgments we are unaware of until faced with a situation in which they are expressed. So they need not be explicit conscious evaluative judgments; given Smith's broad sense of "judgment" as a tendency to regard something as significant, the important takeaway for our purposes is that we are evaluable for our beliefs and actions because they reflect—by being rationally related to—deeper attitudes and judgments we have towards, e.g., the content of that belief, the

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142 Smith, A. "Responsibility for Attitudes," 251.
143 Smith "Responsibility for Attitudes," 262.
144 *Ibid*, 251.
145 cf. *Ibid*, 261-2: "ordinary cases of belief, intention, most desires, fear, indignation, admiration, and guilt, among others, as well as our moral perceptions and various patterns of unreflective thought and feeling which we take to be sensitive to and expressive of our underlying values and commitments. Since explicit choice or voluntary control is not necessary for these rational connections to judgment to obtain, [the rational relations] account implies that we can be responsible for our spontaneous attitudes and reactions no less than for our explicit practical and theoretical conclusions."

desirability of an action, the more general goal of having accurate beliefs, or of doing the right thing.

In other words, the fact that our beliefs and actions are related to underlying evaluative commitments and judgments explains how we can be evaluated for belief since those commitments and judgments are expressions of who we are. More generally, a subject S is evaluable for a belief that p iff her belief that p is rationally related to her commitments and judgments. The implication, though Smith is silent on this, is that an individual is likewise evaluable on the basis of her underlying commitments and judgments. Presumably, this is due to the fact that those underlying commitments and judgments are subject to assessment and revision by the individual who has them. (If so, then her view fails to explain what underwrites the appropriateness of reactive attitudes.[146] But, I shall set that aside as my purpose is not to critically examine Smith's view, but to gain clues for where to look in an account of epistemic competence.)[147]

Smith avers that our underlying evaluative judgments and commitments are crucial to understanding evaluability in light of omissions. While it is true that my lack of awareness about a particular feature of an action or belief may not directly implicate an evaluative commitment—e.g., my failure to adequately attend to that feature may not be due to my judging that feature as unimportant—such commitments nevertheless explain their

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[146] Smith disagrees. She contends the seemingly circular nature of the evaluability of our attitudes or the underlying commitments betrays the holistic character of moral evaluation. The picture she presents is thus more complicated.

[147] Note, there is potential difference in Smith's goals for her account and my own. Although she states she is interested in an explanation of moral attributability, she may in fact provide only an account of moral evaluation. The underlying judgments and commitments she relies on are supposed to be expressed in the actions we are evaluated based upon. However, this seems to presume that we are already morally attributable. By contrast, it seems that since my interest is in how one becomes epistemically attributable, I need something that explains what makes those judgments and commitments possible. Presumably, whatever accounts for this in the epistemic realm, would mutatis mutandis account for it in the moral realm as well.

Putting this point together with the lesson about our constitute psychology we gleaned from Sher, we get the following: Some of our cognitive abilities make possible the ability to have evaluative commitments and make evaluative judgments, which commitments and judgments are rationally related to our evaluable beliefs (or omissions).

appropriateness for moral attributability. Sher's example of a woman who leaves her dog in a hot car is illustrative of this. Suppose the woman, Alessandra, thinks she will just be a minute picking up her child from school and so decides to leave her dog in the car momentarily. She then gets caught up in an unscheduled meeting with the teacher and principal. We can even understand how the content of that meeting could make her forget that her dog is in the hot car. It does not appear accurate to think that Alessandra does not value the dog and that is why she left her in the car. In which case, our moral evaluation of Alessandra is not directed at the distorted commitment. Rather, it is precisely because she does value the dog that she recognizes herself as being responsible for her lapse in attention and awareness. We can easily imagine the guilt Alessandra would feel in such a case, especially if the result of her negligence was the death of the dog.[148]

When we target individuals with epistemic reactive attitudes, we do so because their beliefs and epistemic behavior(s) reflect underlying commitments and evaluative judgments, even commitments they may have been unaware of; thus, our appraisal of them is directed at who they are and not just at what they do. This explains the common phenomenon of people acting out of character. When there is a mismatch between an individual's judgments/commitments and their actions/beliefs, we seek further understanding. It is not just that we expect one's judgments to be consistent with one's attitudes and actions, but that one's judgments influence one's attitudes and actions consistently as well.

Importantly, our patterns of belief formation are not just a function of the cognitive equipment that we happen to have. No theory of epistemic competence can appeal only to

[148] This is evident in the horrific tragedy of parents who have forgotten their child in hot cars. Some of these parents are simultaneously convinced that their negligence was a deeply tragic accident resulting from overwhelming distraction and they are nevertheless still guilty for their negligence. See https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/fatal-distraction-forgetting-a-child-in-thebackseat-of-a-car-is-a-horrifying-mistake-is-it-a-crime/2014/06/16/8ae0fe3a-f580-11e3-a3a5-42be35962a52_story.html?utm_term=.3934e36f1183

that equipment in order to account for our openness to epistemic reactive attitudes. To suggest otherwise is to skate dangerously close to suggesting that electric eyes above grocery store doors are likewise open to such attitudes. In addition to properly working cognitive faculties, an individual must be capable of having evaluative commitments. Commitments and judgments go hand in hand. If I am committed to X, then either I judge X to be valuable or I am disposed to judge X as valuable.

And yet, moral or epistemic evaluability—and thus competence—cannot be a matter only of our attitudes and actions expressing our value judgments. Nor can it be about properly functioning cognitive faculties coupled with our evaluative judgments. A child raised in a hateful racist home may have deep judgments and properly working faculties but still fail to be the appropriate subject of reactive attitudes. Something more needs to be required. But what could that be? What is missing from the child raised in the racist home?

Young children, we can agree, are not open to epistemic reactive attitudes. As I stated in chapter one, the apparent evaluation of children is misleading; evaluative language directed at children functions pedagogically to guide, instruct, or train children into the right kinds of behavior, thinking, or attitudes. When we tell young children they should know better, we are training them to know better. By contrast, when we tell adults they should know better we indicate genuine disapprobation. Young children may have properly developing cognitive faculties and even have deep evaluative judgments, but what they are missing is an ability to recognize and assess reasons and norms. Of course, children gradually become evaluable as they mature and so become limited participants in epistemic exchanges, though, to reiterate, this is not true of young children. In other words, children are not (fully), while properly developed adults are, reasons-responsive. Fundamentally, this amounts to being able to recognize and be moved by reasons in favor belief and action. More subtly it requires that an

individual possess various intellectual skills or cognitive abilities that they know how to deploy. This entails some kind of norm recognition as well. Not only does the young racist child not recognize that her racist values fail to meet norms of belief she lacks the ability to recognize (relevant) norms of belief.

If this is right, then the epistemic condition or whatever analogue there is for general epistemic competence seems to require three conditions. First, one's beliefs must result from cognitive faculties that are normally functioning or developing. Second, one must be capable of judgment; negative assessments are underwritten (at least in part) by inconsistency or incoherence between one's judgments and one's attitudes or by failing norms that would justify that judgment or by an inconsistency between rival judgments. Third, one must have the ability to recognize justifying reasons for, and thus the norms that govern, belief.

3.3. Epistemic Competence and Virtue Epistemology

The discussions of doxastic control and awareness have each pointed to the idea that whatever underwrites epistemic reactive attitudes must be deep and stable features of the individual being evaluated. They must be deep in order to explain evaluability in light of omissions. And, they must be stable because they must explain basic competence that implies the appropriateness of reactive attitudes across a range of situations and for a variety of beliefs. The previous discussion also highlights the idea that we evaluate individuals based on *how* they acquire and maintain beliefs. Epistemically competent individuals know how to

know. They exercise or manifest their competence in their belief acquisitions and retentions. Or, they fail to exercise or manifest their competence in their belief acquisitions and retentions. But it is precisely because we recognize (i) that they are competent or (ii) they fail to exercise or manifest that competence that we evaluate them as we do. This suggests another place to look for the constitutive features of epistemic evaluability: virtue epistemology. Specifically, the recent claim that epistemic virtues are best thought of as cognitive abilities furnishes us with the tools to further explain evaluability as underwritten by structural features of our psychology that make possible value judgments and commitments.

The central thesis of virtue epistemology is the claim that epistemic subjects are the primary locus of evaluation by virtue of being the primary source of epistemic value. If we want to understand the nature of knowledge or warranted belief, we first must understand the epistemic traits of individuals. In particular, we must understand epistemic virtues. The virtue epistemologist claims that in order to understand the normative properties of belief, one must first understand the traits and properties of the individual who has that belief; the direction of analysis is from believer to belief. This contrasts with the traditional analysis of knowledge and belief. The traditional epistemologist maintains that the normativity of belief is not dependent on the properties of epistemic subjects, but instead depends on the various logical or evidential relations among propositions. For example, suppose we claim that justified belief is belief supported by the evidence. The traditional epistemologist first attempts to understand the concept of evidence abstracted from any individual whose possesses it, and then claims that justified belief is belief that conforms to that evidence. The virtue epistemologist demurs; justified belief is function of manifesting intellectual virtues. In his landmark paper, Ernest Sosa suggests a stratification of justification such that:

> Primary justification would apply to *intellectual* virtues, to stable dispositions for belief acquisition, through their greater contribution toward getting us to the truth. Secondary justification would then attach to particular beliefs in virtue of their source in intellectual virtues or other such justified dispositions.[149]

Importantly, for Sosa, intellectual virtues are kinds of reliable faculties or capacities or abilities:

> … It may be one's faculty of sight operating in good light that generates one's belief in the whiteness and roundness of a facing snowball. Is possession of such a faculty a "virtue"? Not in the narrow Aristotelian sense, of course, since it is not disposition to make deliberate choices. But there is a broader sense of "virtue," still Greek, in which anything with a function—natural or artificial—does have virtues. The eye does, after all, have its virtues, and so does a knife.[150]

For Sosa, intellectual virtues are reliable cognitive faculties. Picking up on this, John Greco has defined knowledge in terms of intellectual virtues understood as cognitive abilities.[151] Since this work is not concerned with the nature of knowledge, going into the details of their respective accounts would take us too far afield. The relevant features of virtue epistemologists' characterization of intellectual virtues for my purposes are the following. First, virtues are, for some sense of that term, abilities.

> Epistemic virtues or competences are abilities…Each such disposition is associated with a cluster of conditionals involving triggering antecedents and manifesting consequents.[152]

Sosa variously defines intellectual virtue as a disposition,[153] an inner nature,[154] and an ability.[155] Inspired by Sosa, Greco characterizes intellectual virtues as abilities:

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[149] Sosa, "Raft," 189.
[150] *Ibid* (271).
[151] Greco, *Skeptics*; "The Nature of Ability and the Purpose of Knowledge." Philosophical Issues 17, no. 1 (2007): 57–69.
[152] Sosa, Ernest. *Knowing Full Well.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press): 80.

> A number of authors have defended the idea that knowledge is true belief grounded in intellectual virtue. If we think of intellectual virtues as abilities (or powers) of the knower, then the claim is that knowledge is true belief grounded in intellectual ability. This idea is closely related to another: that knowledge is creditable true belief. The ideas are related because a special sort of credit is due for success through ability, and on the present account knowledge is a kind of success through ability.[156]

Given this identification, after this brief section, I will restrict my discussion to cognitive abilities. Since virtue epistemologists locate the seat of epistemic evaluation in epistemic subjects and I have intimated the same, it is accurate to see this work as part of the larger virtue theoretic approach to epistemology.

A second important feature of intellectual virtues is that they are dispositions. As such, the exercise or manifestation of them is not the primary ground of the aptness of evaluation. Put differently, evaluation is not apt only in cases of the exercise or manifestation of an intellectual virtue, but rather, it is enough that one merely has the virtue. Because by their very nature intellectual virtues—cognitive abilities—are stable dispositions, evaluation is apt even if (especially if) one fails to exercise or manifest the ability in situations that call for it.

Third, since intellectual virtues are part of one's cognitive character, it follows that cognitive evaluations of the kind that implicate epistemic competence are character evaluations. When we target individuals with reactive attitudes, recall, we evaluate the individual and not the belief. Intellectual virtues offer the resources to explain this; epistemic subjects are the primary locus of evaluation and the primary source of epistemic value.

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153 Sosa, *Perspective*, 140.
154 *ibid,* 287.
155 Sosa, E. *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge. Vol. 1.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007):
83.
156 Greco, "Ability," 57.

Fourth, an individual is more or less intellectually virtuous. Alternatively, we have more or less mastery over our cognitive abilities. While evaluations in some domains may be apt, evaluations in other may be inapt.

Finally, we acquire our cognitive character—thus the virtues or abilities constitutive of it—as well as the exercise and manifestation of that character before we are aware of doing so. There are two relevant implications of this point. I suggested in the previous sections that evaluability is partially explained by structural features of our cognitive lives that make possible our evaluative commitments and judgments. The structural features that play this functional role just are certain of our cognitive abilities. Now, many of those evaluative judgments and commitments—not to mention the abilities themselves—arise organically and spontaneously in our upbringing and our experiences in early development. One might think this exempts us from evaluation since we had no choice in the matter. This is mistaken; since the conditions of epistemic competence are not very demanding, unless our development was radically manipulated or derailed we are not exempt or absolved from evaluation based on beliefs that arise from those abilities, judgments, and/or commitments. The abilities that constitute epistemic competence are acquired through the course of ordinary development rather than through explicit instruction much like language is acquired. We learn to, e.g., recognize and assess reasons at the same time as we acquire beliefs, some of which shall come under later scrutiny in light of a mature (enough) ability to assess the reasons for them. (In chapter six I address this potential worry more fully.)[157]

The second relevant implication is related to the first. Because cognitive virtues are habits, they largely operate "automatically". This suggests both a resource and a drawback. The resource is that self-conscious epistemic regulation is downstream from virtue. My

[157] See the discussion of Joe, the climate-science denier, in §6.4b.

virtues or abilities may be operative without my awareness. The drawback is how to understand the "automaticity" involved without thereby severing the appropriate connection required for evaluability. The answer lies both in which virtues constitute epistemic competence and in the nature of epistemic virtues (cognitive abilities), which I discuss at length in chapter 6.

Thinking about evaluability as grounded in epistemic virtue suggests itself as quite plausible. Much of the work in virtue epistemology arises from analogies with virtue ethics, not least of which is the central focus on agents. In exercising or manifesting her intellectual virtues, an agent can influence not only what, but how, she believes because those virtues are part of her. An agent or subject approach to epistemology naturally lends itself to an investigation into epistemic competence, fundamentally, because the latter focuses wholly on the epistemic subject. Indeed, an alternative question to the competence question is the agent question: under what conditions is an individual an epistemic agent? It is no surprise then, that to find an answer to that question, we must turn to an agent-centered approach to epistemology. In light of the current discussion, another analogy with virtue ethics seems apt. In virtue ethics, we might say that the virtuous agent knows how to act. In virtue epistemology, we might say that the virtuous agent knows how to know.

Thus far I have only implied that intellectual virtues constitute epistemic competence. To be sure, from what we have seen in this section, intellectual virtues appear to be able to provide the needed explanation to ground evaluability while also avoiding the difficulties I have raised for doxastic control and awareness. But, it is one thing to say that intellectual virtues can answer the competence question and another thing to present an account of how they can do so. The rest of this work is dedicated to that central challenge. Before concluding, however, I should like to make two further comments about virtue

epistemology, one concerning cognitive ability and the other concerning where I see myself fitting into discussions of virtue epistemology.

As I suggested in the introduction to this work, we should read no more into the notion of "virtue" than ability. Recent work in virtue epistemology has been comfortable with talk of cognitive abilities in lieu of cognitive virtues, especially among those within the broadly reliabilist tradition.[158] I follow this trend since I argue that competence is constituted by a kind of know-how and some instances of know-how are nothing over and above having an ability. It would be odd, at the very least, if not wholly misguided to think of know-how as constituted by virtues. Additionally, the positive connotations of "virtue" potentially lead to unnecessary complications that the neutral "ability" avoids.

Before concluding the argument of this chapter, I should like to note the idea that virtuous agents know how to know marks an important supplementation to current accounts of virtue epistemology. As I mentioned above, by and large, virtue epistemologists have used the resources provided to address perennial epistemic questions. As such, the epistemic virtues and abilities they focus on play an explanatory role in understanding knowledge. The abilities I shall make use of are different, albeit still epistemic. Specifically, I shall argue that some of our cognitive virtues or abilities, make possible the appropriateness of evaluation; they constitute general epistemic competence. One particularly salient difference lies in whether the ability in question was manifested in the belief acquisition. Since current views focus on knowledge, advocates maintain that that bit of knowledge is (partially) constituted by the virtue or ability in question; since knowledge just is true belief caused by intellectual virtue, in order to know that p, I must have manifested or exercised a

[158] See Greco, J. "Ability," 57–69; Sosa, Virtue *Epistemology* Vol. 1; and §3.3 for more on cognitive virtues as cognitive abilities.

relevant ability. By contrast, in order to be evaluable, I need not have exercised or manifest the relevant ability; it is enough merely that I actually possess the relevant ability.

Conclusion

I have intimated throughout chapters two and three that epistemically competent individuals have certain abilities, skills, and know-how. In the remainder of this work, I turn to develop an account of know-how and apply it to epistemic competence. The main idea is that what explains the aptness of epistemic reactive attitudes is that the individuals we target such attitudes with have the ability to recognize epistemic norms and exercise/manifest their cognitive abilities to satisfy those norms.

The chief obstacle to this idea is the recent defense of intellectualist accounts of know-how. According to the intellectualist, knowing how to do something just is a kind of knowing that something is the case. Put differently, no know-how with factual or propositional knowledge. If so, then know-how is not an ability at all so knowing how to know is not a matter of exercising/manifesting cognitive *abilities*. Rather, it is to have factual or propositional knowledge of epistemic norms and what must be done to meet them. Moreover, intellectualist know-how appears to entail that we have evaluable propositional knowledge before we are competent to have evaluable propositional knowledge. In order to defend my view, I must overcome this obstacle. To this task, I now turn.

4. Modest Anti-Intellectualist Know-how

In this chapter, I have one principal aim. I argue for a kind of modest anti-intellectualism about knowledge-how—the thesis that know-how is not constituted by know-that. In particular, I argue that some kinds of know-how are not (even partially) constituted by know-that.[159] In doing so, I will have paved the way for the account of knowing how to know that I develop in the following chapters.

Thus far, I have argued that in attempting to account for the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes two intuitive necessary and/or sufficient conditions are neither necessary nor sufficient.[160] On the one hand, the kind of control required to ground epistemic evaluability is lacking in the epistemic domain; we simply do not have the control over our beliefs that could play that role, if we have any control over our beliefs at all. On the other hand, we are responsible for beliefs even when we are not aware of them, either because we do not have a belief we should (or because we have a belief we should not even though we are unaware of it). But the problem with awareness as the ground of person-level evaluations is compounded by the fact that we can fail to be apt targets of evaluability even when we are aware of the belief(s) and when we are aware of the faculties and capacities that

[159] In order to situate the view I am advocating, I shall have to present the lay of the land when it comes to know-how, but the view I offer largely ignores the question whether all forms of know-how reduce to know-that. Since my aim is to present an explanation of the appropriateness of person-level epistemic evaluation, my discussion will not attempt to settle the greater issue.

[160] Recall that in the case of strong doxastic voluntarism the theoretical sufficiency is irrelevant to grounding epistemic competence since we actually do evaluate others on the basis of their beliefs and we do not have strong control over them.

produce those beliefs. Hence doxastic awareness is not even sufficient for person-level epistemic appraisal. The failure of these previous attempts to ground evaluability does not, however, lead to skepticism concerning epistemic evaluability—and thus, warranted evaluation. Put most simply, we are evaluable for our beliefs because we have certain kinds of cognitive abilities. It is only then that we know-how to know.

We shall arrive at this view of cognitive ability and know-how in due course, but first I must defend a more general thesis about knowledge-how. In particular, I must argue that some know-how is not constituted by know-that. The reasoning behind this is rather straightforward. If, as I want to argue, knowing how to know underwrites epistemic evaluability, then know-how must not itself be propositional in nature. If know-how is propositional, then since when one has propositional knowledge one is (presumably) subject to person-level evaluations I will have either begged the question or become open to a vicious regress.[161] If, on the other hand, know-how is not constituted by know-that (or otherwise necessarily bound up with it), then the conditions under which one is the appropriate target of person-level evaluations for knowledge-how are different from the conditions under which one is the appropriate target of person-level evaluations for knowledge-that.

[161] There is another possibility here that, at least in this chapter, we shall not touch on. One might instead argue for a multiple levels approach to knowledge. There might be some kinds of knowledge for which person-level evaluations are inappropriate and others where such evaluations are apt. One might further insist that the latter presupposes the former. So, in order to get to the kinds of knowledge for which we might be evaluated, we first have a lower level knowledge. This split-level approach to knowledge has been defended by Sosa (*Perspective*; "1991; *Reflective Knowledge: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge. Vol. 2.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); 2010; *Knowing Full Well. Vol. 2.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) though he has not specifically put it to the use I have just suggested.

4.1. Intellectualism and Anti-Intellectualism

When we say that Susan knows that Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States, we are saying that Susan is related in a certain way to a proposition, namely the proposition that [Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States]. Thus, we more or less understand who or what the relata are when we discuss or think about or ascribe propositional knowledge. But when we turn to knowledge-how, it is not so clear.

Suppose we say, "Susan knows how to type 75 words per minute." Clearly the first relatum is [Susan]. What is the second? Is it [how to type 75 words per minute]? Or, is it [type 75 words per minute]? This is perhaps the central issue at debate when it comes to know-how[162] since our answer to this provides the focus for examination on the relation itself. If we think the second relatum is [how to type 75 words per minute], then the relation we are interested in appears to be nothing more than the knowing relation in propositional knowledge. If, on the other hand, we think the second relatum is [type 75 words per minute], then the relation is knowing how to, where that is not to be understood in terms of propositional knowledge.[163]

This, then, is the crux of the debate: is the knowing relation in know-how a species of the knowing relation in propositional knowledge or is it not? Those that maintain that it is, and have thus intellectualized know-how, are aptly labeled intellectualists and those who

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[162] Bengson and Moffett ("Nonpropositional Intellectualism," in *Know How* in Bengson and Moffett (eds.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 161-195) demur. They argue there are two central debates. One concerns the grounds of know-how and the other concerns the nature of know-how. I examine this more nuanced account of the debate(s) in §4.4 below.

[163] Stanley and Williamson ("Knowing How." *The Journal of Philosophy* (2001): 411–444) bring this out most clearly in their discussion of the semantics of knowledge-how sentences.

maintain that it is not, and have thus not intellectualized know-how, are fittingly labeled anti-intellectualists. If this is the right way to characterize the central issue and the two broad camps in the dialectic, then in what follows, I defend anti-intellectualism about know-how; more precisely, I defend a modest anti-intellectualism, one which maintains that some kinds of know-how are not constituted by know-that.

In this section, I shall briefly present the lay of the land when it comes to know-how and present some of the putative difficulties for intellectualism. It is important that I present the dialectic since my argument for the modest anti-intellectualism I prefer shall exploit the fact the intellectualists rely on extremely high-level examples of know-how. In §4.2, I attempt to further strengthen the intellectualist case by examining the claim that it is possible to have know-how without the corresponding ability, but each putative case suffers from the same fundamental issue: the fact that rarefied examples of know-how do not require a corresponding ability does not undermine the claim that some know-how is nothing over and above having an ability. I turn to my positive reasons for modest anti-intellectualism in §4.3. There I argue that there are cases of know-how that could not be instances of knowledge-that; there are basic or quite low-level examples of know-how that could not be (even partially) constituted by propositional knowledge, and thus modest anti-intellectualism is motivated.

a. Ryle's regress

The current debate about know-how began with Ryle's attack on Cartesian dualism. He famously argued that knowing how to do something is not knowing that something is the

case[164]—nor is knowledge-how constituted by knowing that something is the case. As he states it, "… knowing-how is not reducible to any sandwich of knowings-that."[165] Ryle's stated purpose was to "try to exhibit part of the logical behaviour of the several concepts of intelligence, as these occur when we characterize either practical or theoretical activities as clever, wise, prudent, or skillful, etc."[166] There are two steps to exhibiting this behavior. First, he dispels the intellectualist view that know-how reduces to or otherwise involves some piece of propositional knowledge (causally relevant to bringing about the act). Second, he attempts to show that know-how is presupposed in know-that. I shall focus on the former.

I have suggested that the central issue turns on whether in knowing how to do something (φ) one must have some propositional knowledge that p (at least partially) constitutive of φ-ing. The intellectualist contends that all instances of know how are (at least partially) constituted by propositional knowledge. Ryle emphatically denies this, arguing that thinking of intelligent behavior along intellectualist lines generates a regress in two directions. The first direction of the regress maintains that since according to the intellectualist a prior consideration of principles or rules is required for intelligent behavior, no piece of behavior could possibly be intelligent. The argument, call it the basic regress, is reconstructed, simply, as follows:[167]

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164 Ryle, Gilbert. "Knowing How and Knowing That: The Presidential Address." *In Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. (1945): 1–16; *The Concept of Mind*. (London: Penguin, 1949). Reprinted (New York: Routledge, 2009): Ch 2.

165 Ryle, "Knowing How," 15.

166 Ryle, "Knowing How," 1.

167 Stanley and Williamson ("Knowing How") thus miss a crucial point in their reconstruction. According to S&W, Ryle's argument is this:

> (1) If one Fs, one employs knowledge how to F
> (2) If one employs knowledge that p, one contemplates the proposition that p.
>
> …If knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that, the content of knowledge how to F is, for some φ, the proposition that (F). So, the assumption for reductio is:

(BR1) Intelligent behavior requires prior (or perhaps simultaneous) consideration[168] of some proposition p. [Taken as an assumption given intellectualism]
(BR2) Consideration of p can itself be done intelligently or stupidly.
(BR3) Therefore, before one can consider p, one must consider a further proposition q about what is or is not adequate or appropriate contemplation of p, *ad infinitum.*[169]

Stated in this way the argument apparently fails since not all knowledge-that is occurrently contemplated when manifest. An intellectualist can surely maintain the distinction between knowing some proposition and contemplating or considering that proposition. Furthermore,

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RA: knowledge how to F is knowledge that φ(F) (pp 413-4).

They proceed to argue (1) is false since there are many actions we do that we don't know how to do, such as digesting food (p 414). So (1) is true only if restricted to intentional action, which they recognize Ryle maintains. But, then, they argue that premise (2) is false since we might manifest our knowledge that p without any prior contemplation. As Ginet (*Knowledge, Perception, and Memory*. Dordrecht, Nederlands: Reidel, 1975): 7) suggests, there is a distinction between contemplation and manifestation.

This misses the point that Ryle is making, though. Ryle's goal is to show that the intellectualist idea that know-how is a species of know-that is false. It is perfectly consistent with that claim that some instances of know-how are accompanied with or are manifestations of know-that. To show that intellectualism is false all that is required is that there are instances of know-how without the accompanying know-that. Or, as Ryle does, there could not be know-that without know-how since in intelligent action there is always application, an application wholly separate from the contemplation of the proposition or even how to apply the proposition. There is a movement of the mind from contemplating a rule, say, and applying that rule in action.

Picking up on this, Hetherington (*How to Know: A Practicalist Conception of Knowledge.* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 68) urges the following reconstruction:

> R: For any action F, and for some content φ describing a sufficient criterion of how to do F: If (when doing F) one knows how to F, then (1) one already has knowledge that φ(F), which (2) one knows how to, and one does, apply so as to do F.

Hetherington relies heavily on the application since with each new instance of knowing how to F, there will be a new instance, according to intellectualism, of knowing the relevant content φ(F) and so a fresh requirement of knowing how to apply it, and so on, ad infinitum.

168 I use "consider" here because Ryle himself does (seen fn. 153, below). But there is an ambiguity between considering whether and considering that. Considering whether is to be in a state of withholding assent to a proposition. When I consider whether p, I am not yet sure of p; I am vacillating between p and not-p. Considering that p is to believe p. It seems then, that Ryle could have in mind both, since both could be done intelligently or stupidly. I might consider whether to go to work tomorrow stupidly or intelligently. Suppose, I am waiting for the markets to close and if the NASDAQ has closed on an even number, I will go, but if on an odd I will not. Currently the markets are open and my mind has not been made up on whether to go. Further, I might consider that considering whether to go to work on the basis of the odd or evenness of the NASDAQ at close is something I should do and so on. Ryle's argument, then, could run on both considering whether and considering that. For ease of use, my discussion will focus on the latter.

169 "…If the intelligence exhibited in any act, practical or theoretical, is to be credited to the occurrence of some ulterior act of intelligently considering regulative propositions, no intelligent act, practical or theoretical, could ever begin. If no one possessed any money, no one could get any money on loan" ("Knowing How," 2).

the intellectualist might also deny that intelligent behavior involves anything like the consideration or contemplation of the act. As Ginet urges:

> "… all that [Ryle] actually brings out, as far as I can see, is that the exercise (or manifestation) of one's knowledge of how to do a certain sort of thing need not, and often does not, involve any separate mental operation of considering propositions and inferring from them instructions to oneself. But the same thing is as clearly true of one's manifestations of knowledge that certain propositions are true, especially one's knowledge of truths that answer questions of the form 'How can one...?' or 'How should one...?' I exercise (or manifest) my knowledge *that* one can get the door open by turning the knob and pushing it (as well as my knowledge *that* there is a door there) by performing that operation quite automatically as I leave the room; and I may do this, of course, without formulating (in my mind or out loud) that proposition or any other relevant proposition."[170]

I take it Ginet wants us to see that since for the anti-intellectualist the *manifestation* of knowledge-how is uncontroversial and automatic, without prior or simultaneous contemplation of a regulative proposition, then *manifestation* of propositional knowledge should likewise be uncontroversial and automatic, without simultaneous contemplation of a regulative proposition. Regardless of what know-how is, one must provide an explanation of the manifestation of that know-how. According to Stanley, "as Ginet brings out, there is no intuitive phenomenological difference of this kind between manifesting one's knowledge of how to open the door and manifesting one's knowledge that one can open the door by turning the knob … [thus Ryle draws] and unwarranted asymmetry between manifesting propositional knowledge and manifesting knowledge how."[171] So, neither the intellectualist nor the anti-intellectualist requires the contemplation of regulative propositions to manifest know-how. The intellectualist makes no commitment to contemplation but only maintains the weaker claim that intelligent acts manifest propositional knowledge. In fact, most of our

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[170] Ginet (*Knowledge, Perception*: 7). Stanley and Williamson ("Knowing How") rely heavily on this short passage from Ginet in generating the dilemma they present for Ryle's argument.
[171] Stanley, Jason. *Know How*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 16-7.

beliefs are like this; we never put into words everything we accept, but we do manifest that we accept it.

The anti-intellectualist disagrees. Since know-how on her view is dispositional in nature, she maintains that the manifestation of know-how is either *sui generis* or perhaps intrinsic to the dispositions one has. Ryle himself argues that to know how to φ is to possess a multi-track disposition to φ; such a manifestation could perhaps be triggered by a wide range of stimuli. Since the anti-intellectualist does not require regulative propositions to manifest one's know-how, she does not fall prey to the same kind of worry facing the intellectualist here. So the asymmetry is not phenomenologically based, but instead the consequence of theoretical requirements on what it would take to manifest one's know-how.

What, then, does the *intellectualist* mean by "exercise" or "manifest" when she maintains that we can manifest our knowledge that one can get the door open by turning the knob and pushing it? In order to stop the regress, she needs to explain how knowing some proposition(s) translates into some piece of behavior. Recall that according to intellectualism to know how to φ is to have some propositional knowledge that (at least partially) constitutes φ-ing. Now this leads to a regress unless the intellectualist can explain how a propositional attitude can be manifest.

Presumably, we manifest a piece of knowledge by doing something, or else how could we be said to *manifest* it? Ginet's own example is instructive. He maintains that in opening a door, one "exercises (or manifests)" knowledge of a proposition whose content is (would have to be) a description of turning the knob and pushing the door. On the surface, this appears to be an example of know-how reducing to know-that. Further, this is supposed to be illustrative of a larger point that all such know-how reduces to know-that. Why? Know-how just is a manifestation or exercise of know-that; the difference between mere

propositional knowledge and knowledge-how is that in the latter we do something that demonstrates the former in particular ways, we manifest it.

Others following Ginet have expanded on this by highlighting the syntax and semantics of sentences ascribing know-how.[172] The standard view of knowledge-how ascriptions is taken to be uniform with the syntax and semantics of knowledge-*wh* ascriptions. In particular, knowledge-*wh* ascriptions contain an embedded question the answer to which is some proposition.

1) (a) Erin knows where to the find the latest research on measles outbreaks.
(b) Justin knows when the big game will begin.
(c) Danielle knows whether to take side streets or the freeway to avoid traffic.
(d) Debi knows what to do to make dying plants healthy.
(e) Jessica knows who the president of Myanmar is.
(f) John knows why the gas leaked.
(g) Jason knows which arguments Ginet uses to object to Ryle.
(h) Jordan knows how to cite a resource appropriately.

Each of the above, have an embedded question and the verb "knows" appears to function the exact same way. The explanation of the syntactic structure of these sentences is theoretically simple. With the exception of (c) the embedded question is straightforward: (a) where does one find the latest research …?; (b) when is the big game?; (d) what do you do to make dying plants healthy?, and so on.[173] It is claimed that in answering these questions we realize the propositional nature of our know-how. Since each of the various knowledge-*wh* ascriptions, when properly understood, points to an underlying bit of propositional

[172] See Stanley and Williamson ("Knowing How); Bengson and Moffett (*Knowing How* and "Nonpropositional"); and Stanley (*Know How*, ch.2). Laura Michaelis ("Knowledge Ascription by Grammatical Construction." in Bengson and Moffett (eds.) *Knowing How* (2011) 261–282) and Jonathan Ginzburg ("How to Resolve How to" in Bengson and Moffett (eds.) *Knowing How* (2011): 1–36) both argue that the syntax and semantics of knowledge-how ascriptions favor anti-intellectualism.

[173] Although "whether" is given the same syntactic treatment as other *wh*- constructions, it is sufficiently different from the others that we should at least flag this. For example, each of the other *wh*-constructions contain embedded questions that begin with the interrogative whereas constructing the embedded question from sentences such as (c) by placing "whether" at the beginning is grammatically incorrect. Instead, we often ask such questions in the following way: "Should I take side streets or the freeway to avoid traffic?

knowledge and since knowledge-how ascriptions are syntactically equivalent to knowledge-*wh* ascriptions, they too must point to an underlying bit of propositional knowledge. Of course, this assumes that the embedded questions in knowledge-how ascriptions can be answered in propositional terms, or at the very least in a way that clearly points to a proposition. Is this right?

Returning to Ginet's example, we would say:

2) Carl knows how to open a door.

The embedded question of which when directed at him is:

3) How do you open a door?

Two responses are open to him. He might reply with an ostensive demonstration while saying "like this". Or, he might reply with a description: "by turning the knob and pushing the door." Before proceeding to examine each of these options, it is important to note at the outset that approaching the question of know-how from the putative linguistic evidence of the syntax of knowledge-*wh* appears to be divorced from what Ryle is interested in when talking about intelligent behavior and know-how. When Ryle talks of knowing how to φ, he aims to illuminate the distinction between an individual who can (has the ability to) φ and an individual who knows facts about φ-ing. His claim is that merely knowing facts about φ -ing does not and cannot translate into intelligent action. Thus, the burden of the intellectualist who attempts to marshal linguistic facts about syntax and semantics to provide an account of know-how must offer an explanation as to how those facts are involved in the relevant

performances of φ-ing.[174] Put differently, the concept that Ryle and subsequent anti-intellectualists want to explain is inherently concerned with performance. Hence, if the linguistic evidence fails to explain an essentially performative notion of know-how, the anti-intellectualist can justifiably maintain that such explanations have not, as they purport to do, escaped Ryle's regress.

b. Know-how, ostensive demonstration, embedded questions, and acquaintance

One possible response to the embedded question in an ascription of know-how is that a demonstration suffices to illuminate the propositional content in a piece of know-how. But, to say "like this" while performing a task as an answer to the question, "how do you φ? invites the follow-up question, "how do you do *that*?" Since the intellectualist is supposed to take comfort in Ginet's response, ostensive demonstration appears too weak a response precisely because it avoids illuminating the reduction of know-how to know-that at issue. In essence, the ostensive demonstration strategy for stopping the regress seems tantamount to dogmatically asserting that the regress stops without giving us any good reason as to why or how the demonstration really is a manifestation of know-that. We are left wondering what happened that turned a propositional attitude into a piece of observable behavior.

Let us unpack this. How might Ginet answer the follow-up question? He has already opened the door and replied to our initial question with a demonstration. If asked the follow-up question, "but, how do you do that?," it seems well within reason to respond (if somewhat annoyed), "I just showed you." Similarly to how one demonstrates one knows the

[174] For an interesting take on Ryle's discussion of intelligent behavior and know-how, see Small, Will. "Ryle on the Explanatory Role of Knowledge How," *The Journal of the History of Analytic Philosophy* Vol. 5 no. 5 (2017): 56-76. He argues that Ryle's aim is action-theoretical and not epistemological.

color red by ostensively pointing to it, we might think some know-how is like that. At some point, we can only point or demonstrate. I agree with this last claim, but it remains to be seen whether this strategy is open to the intellectualist. Could an ostensive demonstration of know-how be understood as an exercise or manifestation of know-that? In order for the strategy to succeed, the intellectualist has to explain two things. First, she must explain what the propositional content in such a demonstration is such that in being related to that content in the appropriate way one has know-how. And, second, she must explain how being so related to that content is what know-how is. In other words, she must explain the "appropriate" relation between a knower and some propositional content in a way that illuminates how that content can be manifest, and she must do this in propositional terms.

One possible response open to the intellectualist is that when ostensively referring to opening the door, I am referring to some content I am acquainted with in that behavior. Similar to referring to red by pointing to a red object, in answering the embedded question in the ascription of know-how, I am referring to the fact that this is a way to open the door. When I ostensively point to the red stop sign and utter, "the stop sign is red," there is some proposition I know—e.g., that color is red—with a content I am directly acquainted with—e.g., a particular shade of red—in that demonstrative utterance (even if that content is not fully describable). So, too, when I ostensively demonstrate some piece of behavior there is some proposition I know—e.g., that is a way to open the door—involving a content I am directly acquainted with—e.g., a way of opening the door—in that demonstration (even if that content is not fully describable). And, if the anti-intellectualist balks at the idea of know-how whose content cannot be descriptively articulated by the agent manifesting it, she places too high a demand on knowledge in general. Surely there is much knowledge that we (especially non-epistemologists) have while we lack the ability to fully describe it or even its

grounds. But then, it should be possible in principle to have know-how (propositional know-how) manifest that is likewise not fully descriptively articulable by the agent who possesses it. Thus, we can have know-how as constituted by know-that if we allow this ineliminable acquaintance.

Unfortunately for the acquaintance intellectualist, the inability to (fully) describe the content of know-how is not the crucial problem. Suppose we say that when Carl knows how to open the door the content he is acquainted with is a way *w* of opening the door and it is a fact that way *w* is a way to open the door. Now, this acquaintance relation is importantly different from a judgment, and hence different from a propositional attitude towards *w*. Acquaintance, whatever it is, is something akin to an immediate direct awareness of some content (e.g., a concept, a proposition, a sensory quality, or perhaps even an object). In the present case, the direct awareness would have to be of a way to open the door.[175] We can even grant that there is way to explain all of this that avoids or overcomes standard myth-of-the-given objections to acquaintance. And we can further strengthen the intellectualist case by suggesting that being so related to this proposition is sufficient for knowing it. Thus, Carl *knows* that *w* is way to open the door. Granting all of this, the intellectualist has provided only one part of the explanation needed—viz., the content of the proposition that knowing-how is supposed to be such that in being related, in an appropriate way, to that content one has the relevant know-how. She still must explain how knowing that content is know-how.

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[175] Bengson and Moffett ("Know-How and Concept Possession." *Philosophical Studies* 136, no. 1 (2007): 31–57; "Nonpropositional") argue for something like acquaintance with a concept. Their view, which they call nonpropositional intellectualism, maintains that knowing how to φ requires reasonable conceptual mastery, or understanding, of the complete concepts necessary to φ. Importantly, they claim that this is neither propositional nor ability-based. Instead, knowing how to φ is an "objectual attitude relation" where the relatum is a nonpropositional item (i.e., a way of φ-ing). ("Nonpropositional: 164). I return to examine this view in §4.3 below.

Any such explanation must preserve a pre-theoretic intuition about the distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that. It is commonplace that some of our knowledge is causally unrelated to our actions and behaviors and some of our knowledge is causally related to our actions and behaviors. The intellectualist must offer an explanation that at once satisfies the demand for an account of propositional know-how and simultaneously explains why being acquainted with some contents reduces know-how to know-that, while being acquainted with others does not. Are we dealing with different kinds of acquaintance? Given our inability to understand and articulate a basic acquaintance relation, how could we possibly distinguish between different kinds? The object of acquaintance cannot help here since it is not the content that is the know-how, but rather the relation to the content that manifests the actual know-how—i.e., that this way is a way to φ. Further, there are some propositions a subject might know, whose content is relevantly action-guiding, but who fail to know-how. For example, I know that a way to perform a gainer—a backwards somersault while moving forward—is to jump forward, throw my head back, and pull my knees to my chest. However, I have tried this for years and still do not know how to do a gainer. And here we come face-to-face with the fact my knowing that this is a way for me to do a gainer is not the same as my knowing how to actually do a gainer.

Interestingly enough, my knowing that to do a gainer an individual must jump with sufficient height and in rapid succession throw her head back and bring her knees to her chest while nevertheless being unable successfully to perform this stunt brings to light an ordinary language point that shall be important throughout this discussion. If my friend asks me if I know how to do a gainer, it seems reasonable for me to respond in each of the following ways: yes, no, yes and no, or in a way. In saying, "yes" I am not deceptively passing myself off as being able to do something that I cannot do. If my friend asks me to show

him, I can respond by saying that I haven't yet been able to do one, but I know that do one I must … Likewise, if I answer no, but proceed to outline the steps for him to take, he would not be entitled to accuse me of lying. The concept of "know-how" is flexible and highly context sensitive.[176] One reason for this is that our goals and practical interests fix the parameters of our inquiries and ascriptions. If I am a diving coach trying to determine if Lisette knows how to do a certain dive, then if she is unable to do that dive, I can justifiably say she doesn't know how to do it. In other situations merely knowing what to do in order to do, e.g., a particular dive is sufficient to warrant the ascription of know-how. Yet, the context will settle relevant sense of "know-how" at issue; the context will make it clear whether merely knowing facts about, e.g., the dive, or having the actual ability to do it suffice for the warranted ascription. While the flexible nature of "know-how" alleviates some of the burden on the intellectualist vis-a-vis the distinction between performative and non-performative concepts of know-how, she still must explain how being acquainted with facts can manifest performance.

Perhaps the intellectualist might argue that being acquainted with *w* in a way that explains know-how is something like what Stanley intimates about ways of thinking or modes of presentation.[177] For once we understand this, he argues, we can see that entertaining (or for present purposes, being acquainted with) certain contents is not behaviorally inert; some ways of thinking are practical and some ways of thinking are not. He illustrates this with Heidegger's example of thinking about a hammer.[178] One might regard the hammer before one quite differently when merely looking at it than one does when using it. This illustrates a central piece of Stanley's defense of intellectualist know-how.

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[176] Thanks to Michael Williams for raising this issue.
[177] Stanley, *Know How*, chapters 4-5.
[178] *Ibid*, 124-5.

When I know how to φ, I know that *w* is a way to φ under a certain way of thinking/mode of presentation. That way of thinking is essentially *de se*; it is not merely knowing a way to φ. Rather, when I know how to φ, I know that *w* is a way for *me* to φ. To get back to embedded questions, ascriptions of know-how contain the embedded question, "how do you φ?" This can be reconstructed as, "in which way do you φ?" Stanley's intellectualist, taking the ostensive demonstration response, denies more is needed; the follow-up question can be answered with more demonstration, perhaps. And, this is key, it can still be a manifestation of propositional knowledge for all of that. Know-how is, after all, not to be found in the content of one's knowledge, but in one's relation to that content.[179]

Stanley's account of a mode of presentation fits in nicely with what I have been discussing as acquaintance intellectualism. Moreover, if he is right then other phenomena can be readily explained. Since the anti-intellectualist is committed to abilities-cum-dispositions to account for know-how, it is puzzling to explain those cases where know-how and abilities appear to come apart. For example, Stanley and Williamson's expert ski instructor who can quite reliably teach his students how to perform complex stunts but who is himself unable to do them (perhaps he was never able to perform them).[180] Or, Ginet's discussion of his son who knows how to lift 100 pounds but is unable to do so because he

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[179] A similar though slightly different account offered by Benson and Moffett ("Nonpropositiona") relies on the objectual understanding. According to them, to know how to φ is to have an objectual understanding—being acquainted with an object, a way of φ-ing and having sufficient conceptual mastery of φ-related concepts—of a way of φ-ing. Importantly, understanding requires propositional knowledge about the concepts one must have mastery over in order to know how to φ. While my arguments against intellectualism shall largely cover Bengson and Moffett's non-propositional intellectualism, my issues with their intellectualist account of concept possession requires supplementation.

Put most simply, the reliance on a propositionally-based view concepts and concept possession to account for know-how is not theoretically neutral as Bengson and Moffett appear to maintain. It is a substantial theoretical question whether concepts and hence the possession conditions of them are best thought of propositionally or ability-dispositional. So to secure a fully intellectualist theory, they would need to show why competing abilities-based theories of concepts and concept possession are false. Unless and until an argument for this is forthcoming, they have succeeded in merely pushing the anti-intellectualism/intellectualism debate about know-how into the propositional/abilities debate about concepts and understanding.

[180] "Knowing How," 416.

simply lacks the strength.[181] And finally, there is Snowdon's counterexample of a world renowned omelet chef who loses both of his arms in a car accident, yet still knows how to make world class omelets[182]. (Though it is unclear, at best, how the world-renowned omelet chef enjoys the practical mode of presentation concerning making omelets anymore.) Each of these examples appears to present some fairly powerful evidence that a dispositional or ability account of know-how misses the mark.[183] Not so with the intellectualist account. Since knowing how to φ is a different kind of knowing that, it is easy to explain the intuitions drawn out by the previous examples: knowing how to φ does not entail having the ability to φ.

But anti-intellectualists have resources here as well. On the more extreme side, one might hold that contrary to both case-based intuitions and linguistic intuitions, lack of ability entails lack of corresponding know-how[184]; once the renowned chef loses his arms, his know-how is gone as well. One wonders, though, whether case-based or linguistic intuitions are prompted by under-described cases. For example, suppose we ask about different intervals of time regarding the omelet chef's ability and know-how; or, perhaps we stipulate the chef has remained at the restaurant training new chef's; or, we stipulate that he hasn't gone near a kitchen for years; or, suppose we suggest that a new technology has emerged for prosthetic arms functionally identical to the arms he lost. We can manipulate these cases to pump whatever intuitions we like. The fact remains that this is an empirical question and the case-based intuitions or the linguistic evidence cannot definitively answer the question.

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[181] *Knowledge, Perception,* 7.
[182] Snowdon, Paul. "I—Knowing How and Knowing That: A Distinction Reconsidered." *In Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 104 (2003): 8.
[183] Bengson, Moffett, and Wright ("The Folk on Knowing How." *Philosophical Studies* 142, no. 3 (2009): 387–401) argue that a presumption in favor of anti-intellectualism is empirically false. In a series of surveys, they found that participants were more likely to deny that know-how entails ability. The lesson from this is that the so-called intuitive appeal of anti-intellectualism falls away. see §4.2a below for my response.
[184] Noë ("Against Intellectualism." *Analysis* 65, no. 288 (2005): 278–290) appears to recommend this with his discussion of cortical reorganization in amputees.

On the less extreme side, one might think that being prevented from doing something either naturally (by loss of arms or lack of strength) or circumstantially (by failing to be near a kitchen or snowy mountains) does nothing at all to undermine the thesis that know-how is distinct from know-that. Abilities are dispositional which means certain enabling conditions must be met for a given ability to be manifest or exercised. Know-how and ability ascriptions are tightly connected to subjunctive conditionals. What's more, the putative intellectualist counter-examples fail to recognize that an ability to φ is more often than not constituted by a constellation of other abilities, many of which may not require full (or any) functionality that the full ability does. For example, the fact that the world-renowned omelet chef lost his arms does not entail that he does not have a host of other abilities that constituted the full ability to make delicious omelets; the loss of his arms does not mean he no longer has the ability to *recognize when* to melt the butter in the pan, *how much* cream to put into the egg mixture, *when to pour* the egg mixture into the pan, etc. The intellectualist counter-examples confuse and/or conflate several abilities and then conclude that loss of one (e.g., the ability to fold the egg at the right time, say), while retaining the others, shows that know-how must be propositionally constituted. Although the omelet chef loses his arms and is thus no longer able to actually make the omelets, he nevertheless retains the majority of abilities that constitute the ability to make delicious omelets; indeed, he can still teach others how to make the omelets even if he cannot demonstrate it.

There is additional worry about the omelet chef example that undermines Stanley's appeal to practical modes of presentation. If the omelet chef continues to enjoy the practical mode of presentation regarding the way(s) to make delicious omelets, it is unclear appeal to that mode of thinking satisfies the pre-theoretic intuition about the distinction between know-how and know-that. How is the knowledge the chef retains after losing his arms

appropriately related to performance? It is clear the chef can no longer make delicious omelets; he has the lost the ability to execute such a performance. But, practical modes of thinking are meant to show that know-how is constituted by propositional knowledge precisely because such modes of thinking are what explains the translation of know-that to a performance. If, on the other hand, the chef ceases to enjoy the practical mode of presentation, then the intellectualist has failed to satisfy the pre-theoretic distinction between know-how and know-that by appeal to practical modes of presentation. Recall, the example is meant to show that an individual can retain know-how absent ability; although the chef lost his arms and thus the ability to make delicious omelets, he is nevertheless supposed to have retained his know-how. The only way for him to have retained know-how absent ability is by being presented with the way to make delicious omelets practically.

Couple the more or less extreme response with the observation that know-how ascriptions are sometimes ambiguous between knowing how to φ and knowing how one φs and the putative counterexamples are readily explained. The ski instructor knows how one ought to do the stunts; he knows what is involved and what it takes to do them. A similar move is available in other cases as well. However, intellectualists deny there is any ambiguity in ascriptions of knows how. While a prima facie case can be made that points to ambiguous uses of "knows-how to" upon closer inspection this falls apart.[185] In particular, Bengson and Moffett show that "knows how to" constructions fail tests of semantic ambiguity.[186]

4) a) John hit a grand slam to win the game and on seventeen at the black jack tables.
   b) Jason saw her rat, but Stephen didn't.
   c) Katrina swung the bat, but she didn't swing the bat.

5) a) John knows how to hit a fast ball and play Black Jack.

[185] See Bengson and Moffett, "Concept Possession," §2 and Bengson, et al., "The Folk," §2.
[186] "Concept Possession."

b) Jason knows how to identify a rat, but Stephen does not.
c) Katrina knows how to bunt, but she doesn't know how to bunt.

The tests in the constructions in 4—conjunction reduction (a), verb phrase deletion (b), and eliciting contradiction (c), respectively—each present a different test for semantic ambiguity that the corresponding "knows how to" constructions in 5 fails. The sentence in 4a is awkward because the verb "hit" expresses two different concepts, one modifying each disjunct. Not so with 5a. The ambiguity of "rat" in 4b allows for a non-standard reading that might mean John saw her tell on someone, but Stephen did not see her *pet* rat. Again, there is no such ambiguity in 5b. Finally, because "bat" has multiple lexical meanings, there is a reading of 4c that elicits no contradiction—Katrina swung the baseball bat, but she did not swing the flying nocturnal rodent. There is no corresponding reading of 5c that dissolves the putative contradiction.[187] Notice, the linguistic ambiguity issue is irrelevant to the accusation that intellectualists confuse or conflate several different abilities (a point we shall return to from a slightly different angle in §4.2a, below.)

What, then, are we to make of the case for anti-intellectualism? In light of the preceding, the intellectualist case for know-how appears to avoid the first direction of Ryle's regress. But this avoidance is only apparent. Consider again the notion that when a subject knows how to φ she knows that a way, *w*, is a way to φ. Even if we can fully grasp the *de se* interpretation that Stanley offers, there is a deeper worry.

On the intellectualist account offered by Stanley, to say that Susan knows how to type the word "the" is to say that there is a way, *w*, such that *w* is a way to type the word "the" and Susan knows that *w* is a way for her to type "the". Suppose we say that *w* consists of some instructions like "depress the "t" key with the left index finger (this is an

[187] Cf. Bengson and Moffett, "Concept Possession," 39.

oversimplification since it is more like "flex left index finger at 15 "degrees", flex first knuckle of left index finger to depress "t" key, but the simplified instructions will suffice for the present point). For the intellectualist, there is no essential connection from knowing *w* to knowing how to depress a key with the left index finger. In other words, Susan may very well know that she can type "the" by depressing the "t" "h" "e" keys and for all that still fail to know how. Unless Susan knows how to depress the "t" key, her knowing *w* is still not knowing how to type "the". So, she needs some further bit of propositional knowledge *y*. Again, knowing that *y* is a way to type "t" will not count as knowing how to type "t" unless she knows how to manifest the content of *y*.[188]

Further, the failure can occur in the other direction from manifestation to knowledge that *w* is way to φ. Suppose that Susan knows that the way to type "the" is to depress "t-h-e" on the keyboard in front of her. Suppose also that she can do this, but that in depressing those keys correctly she fails to know that she is doing so. Perhaps she has some kind of severe dyslexia. By analogy, I might know my co-worker's brother Adam really well—we get drinks regularly, and so on—but I might not know that Adam is my coworker's brother. Why cannot this occur in cases of knowledge how as well? I might know that the way to φ is to *w*, but fail to recognize that my φ-ing is a manifestation of *w*.

There are two problems that the intellectualist needs to overcome here. First, she needs give an explanation of knowing how to φ despite the failure of knowing that *w* is a way to φ entailing that she knows how to φ. Since, her account relies on knowledge of a way, this failure is the equivalent of the failure of the view. Second, assuming she could explain this, she needs to explain where know-how enters into the picture. Since for each way *w* that one knows, there is a further way *y* that one must know in order to manifest *w*, the intellectualist

[188] Cf. with Fantl, Jeremy. "Ryle's Regress Defended." *Philosophical Studies* 156, no. 1 (2011): 125-126.

must provide an explanation as to what generates the actual know-how at issue. These problems are insurmountable. Not so for the anti-intellectualist. Because know-how is dispositional or ability-based, when you know how to type "the", you automatically know how to type "t". Discussing Ginet's example of knowing how to open a door, Fantl nicely captures the point.

> "Intellectualist know-how requires a bottom up guarantee that can never come; your knowing how to open the door by turning the doorknob does not entail that you know how to turn the doorknob, so whether you know how to open the door, even when you know that you open the door by turning the doorknob, waits on a guarantee that you know how to turn the doorknob. Anti-intellectualist know-how provides a top-down guarantee that is there at the beginning; if you know how to open the door by turning the doorknob, you of course must know how to turn the doorknob in order to know how to open the door. But, fortunately, that you know how to open the door by turning the doorknob entails that you know how to turn the doorknob."[189]

The intellectualist position we have been discussing maintains that knowing-how is (at least partially) constituted by knowing-that. In other words, the position is a pure form of know-how. All know-how is (at least partially constituted by) know-that. This strong thesis runs into the problems we have just seen. However, intellectualists about know-how have not contented themselves with merely answering objections to their view, they have presented objections of their own. So, before I can offer my own reasons arguing for at least a modest version of anti-intellectualism, I must first examine the case against anti-intellectualism.

[189] Fantl, "Ryle's Regress," 129.

4.2. The Intellectualist Case(s) for Know-how Without Ability

The pure intellectualist takes an all-or-nothing approach to know-how; all know-how is or reduces to know-that.[190] So, if we can have know-how without know-that, pure intellectualism is false. Or, even more weakly, if any knowledge-how is constituted by some kind of non-propositional knowledge, then pure intellectualism is false.[191] Since standard accounts of anti-intellectualist know-how are ability-based, what we need to show is that abilities and propositional knowledge come apart while retaining know-how. Or, more weakly, that there are some instances of know-how that do not involve propositional knowledge. I shall argue that pure intellectualism cannot explain some kinds of knowledge-how because the propositions that would have to be the content of those instances of knowledge-how, if intellectualism were true, are simply not present. In order to set up my argument, it is necessary to present the intellectualist case for knowledge-how without ability.

Several proponents of intellectualism have taken themselves to have shown that know-how and abilities come apart, and that know-how is retained even in the absence of ability. Furthermore, there may even be some empirical evidence to suggest that know-how ascriptions remain despite the absence of ability. In a survey conducted by Bengson, Moffett, and Wright participants were presented with different cases and asked both if the individuals

[190] The pure anti-intellectualist does likewise but reverses the direction of reduction; All knowledge-that is constituted by knowledge-how. See Hetherington (op cit.) for a defense of pure anti-intellectualism.
[191] And, if any knowledge-how is at least partially constituted by some bit of propositional knowledge, then pure anti-intellectualism is false.

in the cases know how to φ and if the individuals have the ability to φ.[192] Here are the vignettes the participants were asked about:

> 1) Pat has been a ski instructor for 20 years, teaching people how to do complex ski stunts. He is in high demand as an instructor, since he is considered to be the best at what he does. Although an accomplished skier, he has never been able to do the stunts himself. Nonetheless, over the years he has taught many people how to do them well. In fact, a number of his students have won medals in international competitions and competed in the Olympic games.[193]

> 2) Jane is an Olympic-caliber figure skater practicing a complex jump called the Salchow. When one performs a Salchow, one takes off from the back inside edge of one foot and lands on the back outside edge of the opposite foot after one or more rotations in the air. A single Salchow requires one complete rotation. A double requires two. A tripe requires three. A quadruple requires four. And a quintuple requires five. Like virtually all Olympic skaters, Jane is consistently able to perform a triple Salchow. Although Jane can land a quadruple Salchow one out of every three attempts, she is unable to do a quintuple Salchow. In fact, at the present time, nobody is able to perform one. Nevertheless, Jane want to be the first skater to ever land a quintuple Salchow and so she occasionally practices them in her free time. She knows that in order to do a quintuple Salchow, she must take off from the back inside edge of one foot and land on the back outside edge of the opposite foot after five complete rotations in the air. Whenever she attempts this, however, she cannot make it around the full number or rotations without falling.[194]

In each case, a vast majority (81% in (1) and 76% in (2)) judged that the subject has knowledge-how despite being unable to do the stunt. Bengson, et al. went further and tested intuitions about the sufficiency of ability for know-how with the following vignette:

> 3) Sally who is an inexperienced hiker with extremely poor vision, decides to go snow shoeing through the mountains in February. As she is hiking along, an avalanche suddenly starts and a rush of snow sweeps down the mountain and over Sally. Sally, however, mistakenly takes the snow to be a body of water (she believes incorrectly that a nearby damn has broken) and so she responds by making rapid swimming motions. Sally aims to swim through the water towards the surface. Though Sally has never heard of this fact before, making swimming motions is a way

[192] Bengson, et al., "The Folk," 194.
[193] *Ibid*, 391.
[194] *Ibid*, 392.

> to escape avalanches. As a result of her lucky mistake, Sally is able to escape from the avalanche.[195]

In this case, again, an overwhelming majority of participants judged against anti-intellectualist intuitions. These participants maintained both that Sally had the ability but did not know how to escape an avalanche. Finally, anticipating an objection from some anti-intellectualists, Bengson, et al. tested whether having a *reliable* ability to φ is sufficient for know-how.[196] To test the folk on this, they presented participants with one last case:

> 4) Irina, who is a novice figure skater, decides to try a complex jump called the Salchow. When one performs a Salchow, one takes off from the *back inside* edge of one skate and lands on the *back outside* edge of the opposite skate after one or more rotations in the air. Irina, however, is seriously mistaken about how to perform a Salchow. She believes incorrectly that the way to perform a Salchow is to take off from the *front outside* edge of one skate, jump in the air, spin, and land on the *front inside* edge of the other skate. However, Irina has a severe neurological abnormality that makes her act in ways that differ dramatically from how she actually thinks she is acting. So, despite the fact that she is seriously mistaken about how to perform a Salchow, whenever she actually attempts to do a Salchow (in accordance with her misconceptions) the abnormality causes Irina to unknowingly perform the correct sequence of moves, and so she ends up successfully performing a Salchow.[197]

Even on this more sophisticated version of anti-intellectualism, which requires *reliable* ability to φ, participants judged that both Irina had the ability and she did not know how. Since the description includes the fact that whenever Irina tries to do a Salchow, she succeeds (though in a bizarre sort of way), it is clear that she is reliable in successfully performing the stunt. What should we make of these results?[198] This appears to be a fairly

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[195] *Ibid*, 395.
[196] Hawley, Katherine. "Success and Knowledge-How." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, (2003): 19–31.
[197] Bengson, et al., "The Folk," 397.
[198] Note, that more recent attempts to defend anti-intellectualist know-how have relied on the use of case-based intuitions. Noë ("Against Intellectualism"), says, pace Stanley and Williamson ("Knowing How"), that if most English speakers were polled about Pat's know-how despite lacking ability in (1) they would deny that Pat knows how to do the stunts. Bengson, et al. did just that and found overwhelming evidence to support Stanley and Williamson's prediction. Thus, while it is tempting to simply dismiss these findings, advocates of both intellectualism and anti-intellectualism engage with them. So, it is (at least) prudent to say something about them.

strong case for intellectualist claims. However, it is telling that each of the tested cases contained quite high-level know-how, typically involving very many coordinated movements at precise times in precise ways, not to mention the possession of particular concepts such as <outside edge>, <inside edge>, etc. We might wonder whether the same would be true of skills and abilities on a "lower" level.[199]

a. A response on behalf of modest anti-intellectualism

In replying to these vignettes and the results of the surveys, we must recall the fact that both the concept and ascriptions of know-how are flexible. Sometimes the appropriate response to whether an individual knows how to do something is, "in a way." We must also recognize that ability and know-how are threshold concepts. As such, ascriptions of know-how will turn on the context and practical interests of the ascriber. Additionally, for very many abilities when an individual has an ability to φ, there is not one discrete ability that the individual has. Recall the omelet chef and the many abilities he has. The flexible nature of know-how shall be important once we consider whether intuitions regarding the connection between know-how and ability on display in the Bengson, et al., study are the result of the kinds or level of know-how their vignettes highlight.

Suppose instead of testing these cases they tested the connection between know-how and abilities with cases involving elementary addition and subtraction, simple inference,

[199] Interestingly enough, in a different paper, Bengson and Moffett appeal to such lower level abilities in their effort to understand why some know-how ascriptions entail abilities and some do not ("Concept Possession"). They argue that for select activities—activities that entail having the ability to do them—a subject knows how to do a select activity only if the subject "minimally understands" that activity, and a subject has minimal understanding just in case she has "reasonable mastery of certain concepts" related to that activity. For some activities, ability-based concepts (and the corresponding abilities) are not necessary for understanding the activity, for others they are. The latter are select activities.

attention, and the like.[200] I suspect that most people would be unwilling to attribute know-how when there is a lack of ability, or unwilling to attribute lack of ability when there is know-how. Consider how bizarre it is to say that "Johnny knows how to add, but does not have the ability to add".[201] Note, this is not to be read as "Johnny knows how to add, but is unable to add *right now*" (due to being asleep or thoroughly distracted trying to navigate the streets of NYC during rush hour). Nor should we read this as "Johnny knows what it takes to add, but is unable to add." Knowing how to add just is to have the ability to add.[202] Likewise for other very basic activities: knowing how to draw a simple inference is nothing more than being able to draw a simple inference, knowing how to attend, say, to certain features in one's visual field just is to have the ability to do so. In the next chapter, I shall give a fuller account of abilities, but as a rough sketch for current purposes we can say that to have an ability is to be reliable at succeeding in the goal of the ability when trying.

If there are instances of knowing how to do something that are abilities this raises questions about the poll taken by Bengson, et al. In each of the tested cases the subject was attributed either know-how without ability or ability without know-how. But notice the know-how at issue is highly complex. It is not the case that in each of (1)-(4) the subject possesses no relevant ability, rather the subjects in (1) and (2) are said to be experts in the general category of performance under which the specific stunts fall. To test intuitions of the folk on the basis of these examples to build a case for intellectualist know-how is equivalent to testing whether young children and animals have propositional knowledge based on the folk's intuitions about extremely complex mathematics and physics knowledge in children

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[200] See Bengson and Mofett ("Concept Possession") for a fuller discussion about ability-based concepts and know-how.
[201] Cf. Bengson and Moffett, "Concept Possession," 37.
[202] Below I argue that there are some instances of know-how without any relevant know-that. Alternatively, there are instances of possessing an ability to □ while lacking propositional knowledge about □-ing.

and animals. Just because our intuitions (even rightly) judge that young children and animals cannot know that the area of a circle is calculated by squaring the radius and multiplying by pi, it in no way follows that young children and animals are incapable of having *any* propositional knowledge.

Similarly, we should not base conclusions about knowledge-how on intuitions regarding very complex activities. It in no way follows that because our intuitions (even rightly) judge that Pat knows how to do the ski stunts or Irina knows how to do a quintuple Salchow even though neither have the specific ability that all knowledge-how is propositional. First, because many instances of know-how entail abilities as was discussed above. Second, there are very many abilities that Pat and Irina do possess that are not only related to the stunts, but also constitutive of them. Pat's expert skiing ability surely plays a constitutive role in his knowing how to do the stunts. It is as if Bengson, et al. have come to the very end of a chain every previous link of which contained an ability necessary to the subsequent link and decided to ignore everything before it.

Recall the discussion of Ginet's example of knowing how to open a door by turning the doorknob and pushing the door discussed in the previous section. Knowing how to turn the doorknob is constitutive of knowing how to open the door by turning the doorknob and pushing it. Likewise, knowing how to twist my wrist in the appropriate way is constitutive of knowing how to turn the doorknob, which is constitutive of knowing how to open the door by turning the doorknob and pushing the door. By parity of reasoning, knowing how to do the expert stunts is constituted by very much background know-how. It is implausible in the extreme that Pat would know how to do the stunts and teach the stunts without any kind of ability to ski whatsoever, let alone an ability to ski expertly. The most we can draw from the survey conducted by Bengson, et al., then, is that some instances of knowing how to φ do

not entail (and thus are not constituted by) the specific *corresponding* ability to φ. But to move from this to all instances of knowledge-how are instances of propositional knowledge is unwarranted.[203] To reiterate, their findings do not commit one to the irrelevance of ability to knowledge-how.

Despite the methodological worries we have discussed, it seems that there can, indeed, be instances of knowledge-how without the corresponding ability, provided we qualify this with the claim that it does not follow that no abilities are required.[204] As we have just seen, the kinds of knowledge-how that might lead us to intellectualist intuitions of the sort brought out by the judgments in the Bengson, et al. survey are so fine-grained and high-level as to be implausible without coarser-grained abilities to constitute them. Case (4) involving reliable ability is dealt with slightly differently.

Bald reliability is not sufficient for having an ability; one must also try to bring about the end result. The trying component ties the activity to the agent—it makes the activity the agent's own. If this is right, then Irina in (4) does not have the ability, since she does not try to bring about a Salchow, she tries to bring about a different maneuver altogether but ends up doing a Salchow; being able to φ (even reliably) is not the same as having the ability to φ. We shall return to this in more detail in the next chapter. For now we may wonder how these strange and marginal cases can illuminate our ordinary practice of attributing know-how. Neurological disorders involving concept confusion are irrelevant to the ordinary case of knowing how to do a Salchow. These issues notwithstanding, I want to turn to my

[203] To be clear, they only maintain that their survey findings count against the presumption of anti-intellectualism. They later use them to argue for intellectualism but distance themselves from the claim that intellectualist know-how is propositional knowledge. More on their views in §4.4 below.
[204] If it turns out that the qualification is unnecessary and that intellectualist assumptions are false so much the better for my view. All I really need to defend is that there are some instances of knowledge-how that are not (at least partially) constituted by propositional knowledge to establish modest anti-intellectualism.

arguments against intellectualism. In so doing, I shall be providing arguments for a modest form of anti-intellectualism.

4.3. Three Arguments Against Intellectualism (and For Modest Anti-Intellectualism)

So far, the case for intellectualism, as well as the case against (modest) anti-intellectualism has not fared very well. The chief objection to intellectualism—Ryle's regress—has not adequately been addressed and the argument based on the possibility of knowledge-how without ability relies on high-level or quite complex cases of know-how. Despite this, I have yet to make my case for anti-intellectualism. In this section, I remedy that lacuna. Furthermore, my arguments for modest anti-intellectualism take the form of arguments against intellectualism. Put differently, I shall present insurmountable problems for intellectualism by appeal to three separate kinds of know-how that could only be constituted by abilities. Specifically, we will briefly look at evidence in neuroscience and psychology, abilities and know-how in children, and linguistic proficiency.

a. Neuroscience and psychology

There is strong empirical evidence in neuroscience and psychology that establishes knowledge-how without knowledge-that and knowledge-that without knowledge-how. This double dissociation, it is argued, provides a better explanation of the findings in neuroscience, and hence is a better epistemological account. Marcus Adams discusses the relation between different kinds of memory and the knowledge-how/knowledge-that distinction.[205] Note that the following arguments do not rely in any way on linguistic maneuvers involving the syntax and semantics of ascriptions of know-how.

Experimental psychologists talk about two types of memory,[206] declarative and procedural. The former "stores declarative knowledge, i.e., knowledge of facts and episodes" and the latter "stores procedural knowledge, i.e., skill knowledge."[207] Studies[208] have shown that individuals with certain declarative memory impairments—e.g. the inability to store new declarative memories—are nevertheless unaffected when it comes to procedural knowledge and memory. That is, subjects with the inability to make new memories of facts and episodes are still able to create new memories about skills; they can gain more and more skill knowledge. Alternatively, patients suffering from neurological disorders such as Huntington's disease and Parkinson's have strong difficulty in acquiring or developing skill knowledge, but not declarative knowledge.[209]

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[205] Adams, Marcus P. "Empirical Evidence and the Knowledge-That/Knowledge-How Distinction." *Synthese* 170, no. 1 (2009): 97–114.
[206] The distinction is more nuanced than how I will present it. Declarative memory stores factual and episodic propositional knowledge whereas non-declarative memory stores procedural, perceptual learning, among other things. Since my focus is on knowledge-how, I will follow Adams and simply distinguish between declarative and procedural memory.
[207] *ibid*, 104-5.
[208] See Adams, "Empirical Evidence," for discussion and citation of several studies.
[209] See *ibid*, §2.1 for further discussion.

b. Abilities and know-how in children

Whatever one's view of whether young children (ages 2-5) are capable of having propositional knowledge, it is clear that for some abilities (or know-how) children do not (and perhaps cannot) have the propositional knowledge involved. Consider a young child (say 3 years old), Ellie, running down a small hill while pulling a wagon her friends are in. At the bottom of the hill she makes a turn to continue running with the wagon. Now, considering the complex physics involved that explain how this can be done without tipping the wagon over, it is extremely implausible that young children have the corresponding propositional knowledge. Yet, any parent will attest to the fact that children become quite adept at this very quickly. What is more, they are able to reliably make the turn without tipping the wagon across different hill sizes and grades as well as different weights of the wagon. The question the intellectualist needs to answer is: what is (are) the proposition(s) that the child knows that constitute her knowing how to make the turn without tipping the wagon?

Let us attempt to answer this using Stanley and Williamson's account.[210] S knows how to φ iff there is a contextually relevant way *w* of φ-ing such that S knows that *w* is a way to φ and S entertains *w* under a practical mode of presentation. Hence, Ellie knows how to turn a wagon without tipping it if and only if Ellie knows some contextually relevant way *w* of turning a wagon without tipping it and Ellie entertains *w* under a practical mode of presentation. Perhaps the contextually relevant *w* is coarse-grained enough not to require knowledge of the physics involved; perhaps it is enough to maintain some kind of demonstrative proposition as doing the work. In this case, the child needs only to know that I must do *this* to not tip it. Or, a bit more fine-grained, I must make a wide turn or the

[210] See Stanley and Williamson, "Knowing How".

wagon will tip. Fair enough, but this move leads to the obviously false conclusion that I might know how to do the complex stunts that Pat teaches even though I have never skied a day in my life, simply by knowing, e.g., that to do the stunt one must rotate their torso in one direction, tilt one's head back, pull one's legs toward one's head, and rotate their torso the other direction. So, either the propositional knowledge is so fine-grained that it rules out clear cases of knowledge-how, or it is so coarse-grained that anyone can know how to φ by possessing rather general propositional knowledge.

Here is another example: Evie knows how to find Elmo on the page of a book. To know how to do this, Evie must attend to various items (features and objects) in her visual field, focus on those items, discriminate them one from another, etc. Further, she must engage some recognitional capacity that picks out Elmo. Evie is only two years old. If asked, "Evie, what are you doing?" she would respond with something like, "ooking Emmo book" (her "L"s are not great just yet). Again, what is the content of the *w* such that knowing *that* content constitutes knowledge-how? In order to grant that she knows how to find Elmo in a book, the intellectualist must say something like Evie knows that to find Elmo she has to scan her eyes over the book until she sees the furry red monster. But this already is far too abstract for her two-year-old brain. So perhaps it is that she must scan to find Elmo (where she knows Elmo by some acquaintance or the exercise of a recognitional capacity). Even here, the content is far too abstract for Evie to know. The last recourse is to deny Evie knowledge-how; Evie does not *know* how to find Elmo, she merely has the ability to find Elmo. Or, weaker still, she is simply reliable at finding Elmo. Both of these responses beg the question at issue since it is only to the extent that one is committed to pure intellectualist know-how that one is inclined to deny knowledge-how to Evie.[211] Absent the prior

[211] Animal knowledge presents a problem for pure intellectualism as well.

theoretical commitment, there is no hindrance to attributing to Evie the knowledge how to find Elmo.

c. Linguistic proficiency

The fact that individuals become proficient speakers fairly early on and without metalinguistic knowledge about grammar demonstrates that pure intellectualism cannot be true and thus (at least) a modest anti-intellectualism is. Speakers of English become highly sophisticated in their sentence construction well before any metalinguistic knowledge about grammar. Michael Devitt[212] argues against any propositional assumptions in this linguistic proficiency.[213] Instead, he urges a skill assumption for such proficiency.[214]

There are two philosophical arguments that, if sound, would justify the propositional assumption that linguistic proficiency is propositional knowledge.[215] Unfortunately, each of these arguments begs the central question at issue. According to Devitt, Chomsky argues that since grammar is a scientific theory and scientific theories ought to be treated realistically, then given "a speaker's knowledge of her language"[216] we have good evidence of a grammar's truth, hence reality. But, says Devitt, there are two ways in which rules can

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[212] Devitt, Michael, "Linguistic Knowledge," in Bengson and Moffett (eds.) *Know How* (2011): 314-333.
[213] He speaks of linguistic "competence", but to avoid confusion with my sense of competence understood as a general, basic epistemic capability, I will instead use the term "proficiency" as it more adequately captures the sense of "competence" Devitt ("Linguistic") discusses.
[214] ("Linguistic," and "Methodology and the Nature of Knowing How." *The Journal of Philosophy* 108, no. 4 (2011): 205–218.
[215] In ("Linguistic") he presents a third argument and proceeds to refute it. This argument is based on what Devitt calls the Voice of Competence view. Roughly, according to this view, metalinguistic intuitions about, e.g., grammatically correct expressions, serve as evidence for tacit knowledge of grammar. Hence, our knowing how to speak is a manifestation of propositional knowledge about grammar. He rejects this argument for two reasons: first, we have no ready explanation as to how linguistic competence could give us these intuitions (324); second, we have a better more modest explanation in central processor responses to linguistic expressions. I set this argument aside as the technical details would take us too far afield.
[216] Devitt ("Linguistic," 322) reconstructs this from Chomsky (*Knowledge of Language: Its nature, origin, and use* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

govern; in the linguistic case, there are two ways in which the rules of grammar can govern, i.e., issue in linguistic proficiency. First, rules may govern through explicit representation as when a speaker consciously tries to break colloquial habits—e.g., remembering to use the adverb to modify a verb rather than an adjective: "are you feeling well" instead of "are you feeling good." Second, rules may govern simply by being embodied without being represented—e.g., when a child without thought uses the irregular "caught" instead of "catched".[217] What an advocate of Chomsky's view needs is a separate argument to establish that the rules of grammar govern by being represented in competent speakers. Absent such an argument, treating a speaker's knowledge of her language as evidence for propositional knowledge of its grammar begs the question against the skill or ability assumption.[218]

The next argument for a propositional assumption in linguistic proficiency, again proffered by Chomsky, maintains that the fact that people differ in their ability to speak (e.g., due to public speaking courses) and use language (e.g., a writer or poet as opposed to the ordinary speaker) and that some injury may lead to loss of ability without loss of knowledge points to underlying propositional knowledge. Both of these examples show that linguistic proficiency is propositional knowledge only if one already assumes that it cannot be mere knowledge-how—i.e., a skill or ability. Consider the first example. The effective orator and the ordinary speaker may have the same knowledge-that of grammar but only the former is effective at persuading an audience to her view. Why should we assume that there is core

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[217] Devitt's favored illustration of this distinction is a calculator. "When a calculator adds, it goes through a mechanical process that is governed by the rules of an algorithm for addition. But the rules are hardwired, nor represented in the calculator. In contrast, the operations of a contemporary general-purpose computer are partly governed by rules of a program that are represented in its RAM and that it applies. Yet those rules can govern the operations of the computer only because there are other rules that are unrepresented but built into its hardware that enable the represented rules to govern" ("Linguistic," 322-323; "Methodology," 9-10).

[218] A related argument treats ordinary competent speaker's metalinguistic intuitions "about what expressions are grammatical; acceptable, ambiguous, corefer, and the like" ("Linguistic," 323) as evidence for tacit propositional knowledge of grammatical rules. But equally plausible is that ordinary linguistic competence "provides a speaker with ready access to data, not with any intuitive judgments she makes about the data" (324).

propositional knowledge they both share but differ only in abilities? Is it not just as likely as there being two different kinds of knowledge-how, two different skills or abilities? The public speaker knows how (has the ability) to speak competently just as the ordinary speaker does, but the public speaker also has the different (ability) know-how to choose and emphasize the right words, pause for effect, and so on. Why can there not be two different kinds of (ability) knowledge-how at play, the one requiring the other? As the response shows, this argument like the last begs the question against the skill or ability assumption of linguistic proficiency. Devitt's reply to the second case—the loss of ability without loss of know-how—is more complex.

According the second kind of case, since the loss of ability does not entail the loss of knowledge-how, that knowledge-how cannot be an ability. Further, in some cases, the ability is easily recovered. This implies that the knowledge-how was retained. But what could that know-how be if not propositional? Hence, the best explanation of this is that knowledge-how is knowledge-that. Applied to linguistic proficiency, knowledge how to use a language (speak and write) is propositional knowledge. I quote Devitt's discussion at length.

> "Chomsky rightly insists that "to know a language … is to be in a certain mental state, which persists as a relatively steady component of transitory mental states" (1980b, 5). But he writes as if taking this knowledge as mere knowledge how must saddle it with a whole lot of irrelevant features of performance (1986, 10) and must make behavior "criterial" for the possession of the knowledge, not merely evidential (1980b, 5). This is not so. A person's knowledge how can be an underlying steady state abstracted from features of performance. It can be, as Chomsky insists our knowledge of language is, "a *cognitive system* of the mind/brain" (1988, 10) and yet still be akin to a skill or ability. Usually, such an ability gives rise to certain behavior that then counts as evidence for the ability. But the ability may not give rise to the behavior. The behavior is not criterial.
>
> That was my response to Chomsky's argument in *Ignorance of Language* (2006b, 92-93), and it still seems right to me. However, more needs to be said. It looks as if the ability to *F* cannot be simply identified with knowing how to *F* because, as we have just seen, one can lose the ability, perhaps even permanently lose it, without losing the knowledge how. We should see the knowledge how as the necessary underlying part of the ability, "a relatively steady component" that can survive where more overt

> components of the full ability are lost; to take an example mentioned by Stanley and Williamson (2001, 416) it is arguable that a master pianist who loses both of her arms in a tragic car accident still knows how to play the piano, even though she is no longer able to play it… I have preferred to talk of linguistic competence as simply a skill or ability; that's the skill assumption. However, if we must talk of it as knowledge, we should see it as mere knowledge how (of the Rylean kind). In light of the present discussion, that knowledge how should be seen as the necessary underlying part of the full skill or ability.[219]

There are two parts to this response. The first is a restatement of an earlier argument and the second is an expansion on that earlier argument. The strategy is similar to what we have already seen. Namely, that Chomsky has simply assumed that knowledge of a language cannot be mere knowledge-how. He needs an additional argument to show that only propositional knowledge can be a steady underlying mental state and that behavior can be evidence for *propositional knowledge*, but must be criterial for *mere-knowledge how or ability*. Absent that argument, it is within the epistemic rights of the opponent of the propositional assumption to maintain that mere knowledge-how can be both an underlying steady state (i.e., a cognitive system of the mind/brain, as Chomsky urges) and that behavior can be *evidence* of mere knowledge-how, and hence not only criterial for know-how. But unless there are further arguments to support this, then the advocate of the skill assumption is likewise begging the question against the propositional assumption. Fortunately, Devitt argues that there is evidence in the psychology of skills and in psycholinguistics that does just this. But first, we need to look at his expansion of the earlier argument.

Here, he maintains that cases of sudden loss of ability where knowledge-how is retained give us reason to reject the identity of know-how with abilities. Instead, "we should see the knowledge how as the necessary underlying part of the ability."[220] It looks as though he

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[219] Devitt ("Linguistic," 325-6).
[220] "Linguistic," 326.

wants to say that abilities are constituted by mere knowledge-how plus some other feature (what he calls the "more overt components").

Let us walk through this a bit more slowly, first taking the expert pianist as an example and then linguistic proficiency. The claim is the pianist loses the ability to play, even though we would still judge (rightly) that she knows how to play.[221] More accurately, she loses the ability to manifest the ability to play; there may be many abilities she retains (such as timing recognition, what sound the key should make when struck with the appropriate strength, and so on). So, whatever the underlying part of the ability is, it cannot be a skill or ability to actually play since that is now gone. But, Devitt wants to maintain that the underlying part is mere knowledge-how. After we have ruled out two candidates—propositional knowledge and ability—the only thing left is some sort of disposition.[222] This much is hinted at by his qualification "of the Rylean kind".[223] Mere know-how is then a sort of disposition to φ and only becomes a full skill or ability when something is added to it.

Further, this mere knowledge-how is not just a *state* of the mind/brain, it can be a *cognitive system* of the mind/brain. Presumably, the encoding such that this mere know-how becomes a system makes it more stable and therefore know-how rather than just a mere disposition. Applying this picture to the pianist we get the following. The pianist has a disposition to "play" the piano, where "playing" is more than simply pressing the keys in the correct order and in the correct way. According to Ryle's understanding of the dispositions that are our know-how they are multi-track; they may be instantiated in a number of ways: physically

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[221] Like the omelet chef, it is a substantial empirical question whether she retains the ability. Stanley (*Know How,* ch. 6) addresses the issue of whether science or linguistics should settle the question of what kind of state know-how is. My account of modest anti-intellectualism avoids his arguments since I am concerned with instances of know-how that could not be separated from ability.

[222] Perhaps not. In fn. 179 I alluded to Bengson and Moffett's account of knowledge-how as objectual understanding, but whatever we make of that view, I think it is clear that Devitt does not have this in mind.

[223] Ryle speaks of know-how as a multi-track dispositions; knowledge-how is to be disposed to behave in various ways. (*Concept*, 46 fn).

pressing the keys in the right order and right way, imagining that one is striking the keys in the right order (e.g., when working through a difficult technical movement of a complex piece before attempting to perform it), instructing others which keys to strike when, and so on.) In which case, one might have the knowledge-how to play the piano (even expertly) absent hands to do so; the disposition to play may be instantiated in a number of ways.

Similarly with linguistic proficiency, one knows a language when one knows how to use the language reasonably effectively. That proficiency might be instantiated in speech or writing. It might be instantiated in understanding as well. Dumas' Monsieur Noirtier de Villefort communicates quite adeptly with Valentin despite his inability to actually speak or write.[224] Thus, thinking about linguistic proficiency as mere knowledge-how (of the Rylean kind) can answer the kinds of cases that Chomsky has in mind.

To shore up his case for mere knowledge-how, Devitt turns to psychology and (to a lesser extent) psycholinguistics. As we noted above, psychologists distinguish between declarative and procedural knowledge, identifying knowledge-how with procedural knowledge. Since there are instances of know-how constituted by both propositional knowledge and abilities, Devitt urges it is best to think of procedural knowledge as mere knowledge-how.[225] But psychologists also line up the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge with explicit and implicit memory and learning. The latter is characterized as "domain-general and capable of capturing the kinds of complex structural relationships found in language … functioning "largely independent of conscious modulation and [operating] effectively during

[224] Dumas' character appears to suffer from Locked-in syndrome, a condition of complete paralysis of everything but the eyes. A recent example of a person with locked-in syndrome exemplifies the present point. Jean-Dominique Baby suffered from locked-in syndrome and through a frequency-of-use ordered alphabet was able to compose his memoir, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (1997).

[225] This does not appear to be controversial since psychologists are interested in the kind of knowledge that does not involve knowledge-that. This just is mere knowledge-how.

infancy,"[226] and as "extracted from experience … rather than from explicit rules."[227] There is a fair amount of literature dedicated to implicit learning and language acquisition.[228] The evidence points to mere knowledge-how as opposed to propositional knowledge about language.

Devitt draws the following conclusion. The empirical evidence shows that linguistic proficiency is implicit and therefore procedural. This vindicates a skill assumption—that what accounts for our knowing how to use a language is not rule-based, but rather more akin to an ability. But given the reflections on loss of ability above, Devitt would probably be more comfortable with claiming that linguistic proficiency is mere knowledge-how without going into the details of whether is this a "full skill or ability" or a disposition. The central point is that there is a kind of knowledge—manifest in linguistic proficiency—that does not entail or involve propositional knowledge about language or grammar.

Conclusion

The arguments of this chapter demonstrate that there is a type of knowledge that is not constituted by propositional knowledge. When we recognize the complex nature of the

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[226] Reber, Arthur S. "An Epitaph for Grammar: An Abridged History." in Rebushat, Patrick (ed.) *Implicit and Explicit Language Learning: Conditions, Processes, and Knowledge in SLA and Bilingualism* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011): 25.

[227] Ellis, Nick C. "Implicit and Explicit SLA and Their Interface." in Rebushat, Patrick (ed.) *Implicit and Explicit Language Learning: Conditions, Processes, and Knowledge in SLA and Bilingualism.* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011) 35–47.

[228] See Cleeremans, Axel, Arnaud Destrebecqz, and Maud Boyer. "Implicit Learning: News from the Front." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2, no. 10 (1998): 406–416;
Sanz, Cristina, and Ronald P Leow. *Implicit and Explicit Language Learning: Conditions, Processes, and Knowledge in SLA and Bilingualism*. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010)

examples of knowledge-how that do not require the corresponding ability, we find that (1) such examples do not require any ability, and (2) such examples are constituted by both abilities and factual knowledge. The tendency to conflate sophisticated know-how into a simple unit obscures the complex nature of such examples of know-how. If, instead we focus on less complex and relatively low-level knowledge-how, we find that know-how and ability do not come apart. In the next chapter, I shall continue to develop my account of an abilities-constituted view of epistemic competence by focusing on low-level cognitive abilities. Specifically, I articulate a view of cognitive abilities and argue that (at least some of) these abilities constitute know-how. In the final chapter, I home in on those abilities that constitute knowing how to know and thus epistemic competence.

5. Cognitive Abilities

Modest anti-intellectualism maintains that some kinds of know-how are constituted by the corresponding abilities. This is most evident in what I have called low-level abilities, or abilities that are perhaps more basic or foundational for higher-level abilities. For example, the ability to do basic arithmetic like adding and subtracting is required for the ability to do long division. In chapter four, I illustrated modest anti-intellectualism with linguistic competence and recognitional abilities. In this chapter, I want to further defend this idea by arguing that basic mental activities, namely, the exercise of cognitive abilities can be instances of knowledge-how.

Since my focus for the remainder of this work will be on cognitive abilities, I need to clarify what I mean by this term and, importantly, distinguish it from nearby or related concepts. In particular, I shall present an account of cognitive ability as a cognitive process/capacity/faculty that one can exercise guidance control over. Put differently, a cognitive ability is a cognitive capacity that: (i) an individual owns (i.e., recognizes as something they exercise or manifest—or at least they recognize themselves as doing something which entails that they have exercised or manifest the capacity), and (ii) the exercise of that capacity can be motivated by reasons that would reliably cause her to exercise that capacity, if she were aware of those reasons. Distinguishing capacities from

abilities serves the further purpose of explaining how intention might reasonably be a part of belief-formation without committing me to doxastic voluntarism.

I begin by presenting the tension between my repudiation of doxastic voluntarism and the idea that having an ability entails sufficiently reliable success when trying in §5.1. Dissolving this tension requires that we have a clear grasp on what cognitive abilities are. In particular, how are cognitive abilities different from mere capacities/processes/faculties? In §5.2, I maintain that the former are instances of the latter that the subject owns and can exercise or manifest for reasons. Finally, in §5.3 I examine the cognitive ability of attention maintenance and argue that cognitive abilities can constitute (or be) instances of knowledge-how.

5.1. Cognitive Ability and Intention

Abilities in general, and cognitive abilities in particular, can constitute knowledge-how. Some kinds of know-how, what I call mere knowledge-how, are nothing over and above having certain abilities. In chapter 4, I argued for that claim in general. In this chapter, I want to argue that *cognitive* abilities can be instances of knowledge-how. But there is a prima facie worry that must first be addressed, especially when it comes to cognitive abilities. Stated simply, abilities appear to require that one intentionally try to φ whereas mere capacities are activated or not automatically, i.e., without intention. Since I have argued that belief is not under our intentional control, if I want to later argue that epistemic competence is

constituted by cognitive abilities, then I need to address this worry.[229] The account of cognitive abilities, I develop below entails that we exercise a kind of control—guidance control—over capacities and faculties but not over belief. But this claim requires that we first understand what I mean by cognitive abilities and the role that guidance control plays in having them.

Broadly understood, an individual S has an ability to φ just in case S is sufficiently reliable at succeeding in φ-ing across a range of situations when S intends to φ.[230] This is true of abilities in general. For example, when we speak of, say, intending to ride a bike, or make stir-fry, we often imply that a decision, even a subconscious one, has been taken. I have the intention to ride a bike, make stir-fry, and so on, and I execute that intention by exercising the ability (abilities) that will bring about that end; my goal is to bring about a specific end. But we cannot execute an intention to believe; beliefs are produced by our cognitive faculties through various interactions and experiences with the world. If this is right, then perhaps the general sketch of abilities we have before us will not do for belief. However, there are two important ideas central to understanding both what role know-how plays in epistemic competence and why we should think of that know-how as constituted by cognitive abilities that alleviate these worries. First, the fact that belief is not under our control does not entail that intention, for some sense of that term, has no place in belief formation. This is because there are events or episodes that we bring about that are not full-blown actions—and since we bring them about, they are not mere happenings either. Second, beliefs are caused or produced by the exercise of cognitive abilities distinct from the

[229] To foreshadow, the ability to recognize and assess justifying reasons for belief is manifest in our choosing to think harder about an issue, gather more evidence, evaluate whether we weighed the evidence correctly, and so on. Though, some of the ways we do this are rather sophisticated and nuanced.
[230] Cf. Sosa's account of competence in his (*Judgment and Agency*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): Ch 4.

belief itself. Hence, the fact that *beliefs* are not under our control does not entail that the cognitive activity that produces belief is not under some kind control, a kind that satisfies the broadly intuitive account of abilities offered above. Let us briefly deal with the first point (returning to the second in §5.2.b).

a. Know-how and intention

We can distinguish between actions, activities, and happenings. For example, when I stretch my arm to reach a book I need on the top shelf I perform the action of raising my arm. This is contrasted with my arm's rising in the air due a sharp pain, say. In each case an event <the arm going up> occurs, but in one the event is an action that I bring about and in the other the event is a mere happening; my arm happened to go up. We might also say that in the one, I voluntarily raised my arm and in the other my arm involuntarily rose. In chapter two, I argued that belief is not under our voluntary *control*. It would seem, then, that forming beliefs is not an action; it is not something we do intentionally.

Nor should we think that beliefs are mere happenings either. It is not as though all belief formation is wholly passive. To be sure, some beliefs appear to be (perhaps wholly) passive, but others seem to involve activity on the part of the believing subject. For example, I cannot help but believe that I see this computer monitor in front of me when my eyes are open and directed towards it. In this case, I passively receive some visual stimuli and it is interpreted in some mental operations as being appeared to computer monitor-ly, and thus the belief that there is a monitor before me forms. For other beliefs, I do seem to play a significant causal role. My belief about who is a more qualified candidate for president in the 2016 election is a case in point. If I am civically minded, I seek out information about the

candidate's policies, their past record, their experience, and so on. If I find myself forming beliefs about this without doing any of this work, I can step back and evaluate my reasons for thinking, e.g., Hillary Clinton is more qualified and more in line with my values than is Donald Trump. Examples like these illustrate that not all belief formation is wholly passive.

Fortunately, the categories of action and happening do not exhaust the possibilities. To say that a piece of behavior is not properly a full-blown action like intentionally raising my arm does not imply that it is not purposeful. Much of our behavior is purposeful without being intentional. As I write this, I am aware of my leg rapidly bouncing up and down. Is this something that I do or is it something that is merely happening to my leg? Clearly, assuming some external force is not currently stimulating my leg (which it is not), it is something I am doing. Does this mean that I have a reason for bouncing my leg? Not at all; it may be mere habit (which, in my case, it is). Nevertheless, it does appear to be something I am doing. I want to suggest that belief formation is a purposive activity but not an intentional action.[231] Part of this is explained by the fact that the cognitive abilities we exercise or manifest that (partially) cause beliefs are, when they become abilities, so deeply ingrained and integrated in our cognition that we exercise them without thinking, rather like we walk and keep our balance without thinking. And part of this is explained by the fact that exercising or manifesting abilities only influences what we believe.

If we assume that the aim of acquiring beliefs is to gain accurate information about the world,[232] we need only maintain that cognitive abilities play a constitutive role in that endeavor. It does not follow from this that we must exercise those abilities to come to

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[231] For excellent discussions of action and reasons see Mele ("Agency and Mental Action." *Philosophical Perspectives* 11 (1997): 231–249.

[232] We need not enter into the controversy over the aim of belief—and whether there is an aim or many aims and what those are—in order to recognize that we form beliefs in order to, as it were, live and move and have our being in the world. Quite obviously we attempt to gain information—form beliefs—in order to meet goals, solve problems, and generally get on in this world.

specific beliefs. By analogy, the goal or aim of playing sport is to win the game and though we exercise or manifest athletic skills and abilities to accomplish that aim, it does not follow that any exercise or manifestation of those abilities is brought about for the specific purpose of winning the game. For example, I do not pass the ball to the midfielder to <win the game>, though that may contribute to that goal. Or, more accurately, when passing the ball to a teammate, the exercise of my abilities is not for the specific goal of passing the ball in exactly the way that I am passing it. When I kick the ball to the midfielder, my goal is not <place the ball exactly 5 feet in front of the inside of his right foot>. Returning to belief, my exercise of the ability to evaluate my evidence does not have the intention of producing, pecifically, the belief that p. Rather, if I intend anything in exercising that ability it is to have an accurate or warranted or reasonable belief about the *subject matter* of p.

What follows from this is that belief formation is a kind of mental activity. A mental activity preceded by the exercise or manifestation of cognitive abilities.[233] This brings us to the second point that what we control—in some sense—in belief formation is not the belief itself, but the cognitive abilities that produce the belief. In developing this idea more fully we shall have to address the nature of cognitive abilities, the control we exercise over them, and what distinguishes cognitive abilities from mere faculties.

[233] Later I shall argue that at least some of these abilities underwrite the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes. For exercising these abilities is something that epistemic agents do. This is to foreshadow the second consideration mentioned above. The discussion in the remainder of this and the following section is meant to elaborate and defend the idea that Sosa's intuitive characterization of abilities applies to cognitive abilities and that some of these are constitutive of knowing how to know and thus epistemic competence.

b. Marks of abilities

When we ascribe an ability to someone there are three common senses we use. Sometimes we mean only that she is "able to φ" as in, "your daughter has the ability to become an Olympic caliber swimmer." This sense refers to a capacity that is presumably not being exercised. Related to this sense we sometimes mean that present circumstances (dis)allow one to exercise the ability. "Jerry's cupcakes are delicious, if only she were able to make some right now." Here we attribute or deny ability because features of the situation make it (im)possible to perform.[234] Finally, sometimes we mean that she has a kind of skill, as in, "your daughter's ability to swim the butterfly is spectacular." The kinds of abilities that are know-how are those referred to in the last way.[235] To have an ability to φ is to be reliable at achieving φ's aim across a range of situations when intending to do so.[236] There are other marks of abilities relevant for my purposes as well.

When we attribute abilities to others, that attribution "is not shorthand for a longer statement to the effect that the person has the ability to do that thing provided that[237]…;" on the contrary, we typically have a grasp of what those conditions are because we have a grasp

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[234] This example also highlights the similarity between ascriptions of ability and affirming that one could do something. In some ways, "Jerry's cupcakes are delicious, if only she could make some right now" is more natural. However, this does not undermine the fact that we do use ability to imply a capacity to perform.

Part of the difficulty with distinguishing the senses of "ability" is that in some cases the natural language substitute is the modal auxiliary, in others the natural substitute is "able", and in still others the substitute is "knows how". The example of ability as capacity could easily be rewritten, "your daughter could become an Olympic swimmer". The sense of "ability" that implies propitious circumstances is more commonly referenced by "able to" or "could". So, "Jerry's cupcakes are delicious, if only she could make some right now" is much more natural.

[235] They are the innermost skill as Sosa (*Judgment*, ch 4) would say. (See also Glick ("Two Methodologies for Evaluating Intellectualism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83, no. 2 (2011): 131) for a similar distinction between internal ability and opportunity.) With this in mind we shall avoid the alleged counter-examples to anti-intellectualist ability-based know-how discussed in "section 4.2 above.

[236] Notice that thinking of know-how along these lines allows us to make sense of the common phenomenon of being completely unable to articulate or otherwise explain how one does a certain thing. We often know how to do something that we cannot articulate at all. This lends credence to the idea that some know-how is not propositional.

[237] Millar, Alan. "What Is It That Cognitive Abilities Are Abilities to Do?" *Acta Analytica* 24, no. 4 (2009): 232.

of the ability and not vice versa. Our understanding of what would hinder or enable the exercise of an ability is not prior to an understanding of the ability in question as we may never consider a certain situation in which a particular ability would be impeded and yet still know what it involves. It is in knowing what the ability to recognize certain colors is that I know that one is unable to do so in the presence of non-standard lighting (e.g., under a blacklight). I need never have thought of this, however, before I understood what the ability to recognize certain colors was an ability to do.

Moreover, in understanding what an ability is an ability to do we are also aware that different individuals have varying degrees of mastery over that ability. "Ability" is a threshold concept. Thus, in attributing the ability to recognize colors to my young daughters I do not imply that they are able to discriminate between colors as say an artist or an interior decorator could. In this way, "our ascriptions of abilities tend to underdetermine the character of those abilities … so it would be wrong to suppose that an ascription of the ability to [φ] is shorthand for a longer statement that specifies the level of the ability."[238] This is because the context, our goals, and practical interests play a central role in attributing an ability to an individual.[239] To say that my young daughter has the ability to kick a ball is not to imply that she can kick a ball like Cristiano Ronaldo or David Beckham. What's more, it would be infelicitous at best, and rude at worst, for one of my interlocutors to bring up David Beckham's ability as the reason why the attribution to my daughter is wrong. So context matters for ability attribution. But so does one's practical interests. If I want to get my friend invited to a friendly poker game, I may rightly say that he is a good player (implying he has the ability to play well) even if I know he does not play as well as the others in the game. The relative strength of the other players does not undermine my friend's

[238] Millar, "Cognitive Abilities," 63.
[239] See Greco ("Nature of Ability") for further discussion.

ability. Going forward we should keep these marks of ability in mind as we consider specific abilities.

The following descriptions of abilities highlight these marks. In addition, they raise an important question: if the sense of ability I focus on implies reliable success when trying, then presumably there is an explanation of how or when a mere capacity to φ becomes an ability to φ. Let us briefly look at the mundane ability of riding a bicycle, then quickly turn to cognitive abilities to make both marks of ability and the question about capacities more salient.

I have been riding bicycles for over 30 years. For several years as an adolescent, I engaged in some fairly advanced BMX stunts and also some medium-level mountain biking. By contrast, my neighbor's son learned how to ride his bike last fall. He has been riding a bicycle for a little less than a year. Sometimes, though very rarely, he falls while riding not because he is attempting anything particularly difficult. Rather, he has not yet fully mastered the balance required for very slow turns. Now when I think of his ability to ride a bicycle and my ability to ride a bicycle, I never think that his ability is just like mine. Moreover, if I were to tell someone that I have the ability to ride a bicycle and my neighbor's son does as well, only in very rare circumstances (e.g., they believe that I just learned how to ride a bicycle as well) would they think of our abilities as being the same. Nevertheless, we both have the ability in question. Likewise, no one would be surprised or even tempted to deny the ability were they to learn that no matter how hard we try, neither my neighbor's son nor I can ride on icy sidewalks. Turn now to a cognitive ability.

Consider the ability of attention maintenance,[240] which includes the ability to attend to the various features of one's environment. Presumably, this ability is an ability to recognize and discriminate certain features, to call patterns to awareness, and so on, in a sustained way. As is the case with other kinds of ability, attributing this ability is not shorthand for a longer description of the enabling and hindering conditions of maintaining one's attention, nor is it shorthand for the precise degree of the ability one has. Moreover, even in presumably low-level cognitive abilities like attention maintenance there is a distinction to be drawn between having the ability (akin to a skill)—i.e., the ability to make oneself pay attention for a sustained period of time—and merely having the capacity to do so—i.e., with some amount of effort and training one can develop the ability to make oneself pay attention for a sustained period of time.

This is the well-known distinction between first-order and second-order capacities. An individual who can focus her attention to find hidden objects in a game has acquired a first-order capacity to focus her attention. Every individual who is physically and psychologically capable of developing that ability has a second-order capacity to focus their attention. Now, especially, though not exclusively, when it comes to low-level capacities and abilities, sometimes an individual who has not yet acquired the ability performs in such a way that is indistinguishable from someone who has acquired (and manifest) the ability. The young child who normally skips over numbers counts correctly; the first-time archer hits the bulls-eye, etc. In these cases, it seems like the individual has the second-order capacity successfully to manifest the first-order capacity, but it seems equally true that it would be inappropriate to

[240] Attention maintenance, sometimes called endogenous or executive attention or even attentional control, is an ability to control what we attend to and how long. Peterson and Posner ("The Attention System of the Human Brain: 20 Years after." *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 35 (2012) argue there are three subsystems of attention: "(a) orienting to sensory events; (b) detecting signals for focal (conscious) processing, and (c) maintaining a vigilant or alert state" (26).

ascribe the first-order capacity (i.e., the skill or ability) to them. The fact that an individual φ's does not entail that she has the ability to φ, though it does seem to be a good indication that she can develop the ability to φ. To keep this distinction clear going forward, when a subject successfully manifests attention (or any other capacity) where it would be inappropriate to the ascribe the skill or ability, I shall say that the individual manifests the cognitive *process* or *capacity*. Where it is appropriate to ascribe the first-order capacity, I shall say that the individual manifests/exercises the *ability*—in the sense of something akin to skill.

This distinction is important. Young children manifest capacities while failing to have the ability. In some activities, the child is so engrossed that little else penetrates to their awareness (attested to by every parent who has called their child's name while she obliviously played on). But the same child is incapable of searching for or finding her socks, or water bottle, or … So to have the ability, it is not sufficient that the individual merely has the capacity to φ, but rather, having the ability requires direction or guidance. One must be able to attend to features of one's circumstances (and to do so reliably) due to guidance of the process.

5.2. Cognitive Ability and Guidance Control

The idea that having an ability to φ implies reliable success when trying to φ suggests that exercising or manifesting an ability is something an individual can exert control over. To maintain that one must try to φ seems to imply that one can abstain from trying to φ and

this means that when it comes to the exercise or manifestation of an ability, I exercise some kind of control.

a. Guidance Control: Reasons-Responsiveness

What does this control amount to? I take my cue from John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza's work on moral responsibility.[241] They distinguish between guidance control and regulative control. The latter involves genuine open alternatives of action[242] whereas the former involves capacities of action that are both reasons-responsive and owned by the agent.[243] In this section, I shall focus on the notion of reasons-responsiveness and return to ownership in the following section. To be clear, I shall speak of reasons-responsive *capacities* rather than abilities because I am here focused on how these capacities become abilities. Since it is possible, though in practice probably quite rare, that a capacity could be responsive to reasons and not appropriately owned, and vice versa, I reserve discussion of abilities until both pieces—reasons-responsiveness and ownership—are sufficiently clear.

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[241] Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*; Fischer, *My Way*; *Deep Control*.

[242] Their purpose is to offer a compatibilist account of moral responsibility—that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism. As such, their distinction amounts to a kind of control necessary for libertarian freedom/responsibility over action—regulative control—and a kind of control that is necessary for compatibilist—actually semi-compatibilist in their view—responsibility for action—guidance control.

[243] See Fischer and Rivizza (*Responsbility and Control*, ch 3); Fischer (*My Way*, ch 1; *Deep Control*, ch 1-2 and 10-12) for a detailed discussion of guidance control (later called deep control) and the components of reasons-sensitivity and ownership. My discussion of guidance borrows heavily from Fischer and Ravizza. The most significant divergence is that the ownership condition of guidance control for cognitive abilities does not require either beliefs based upon evidence or that the agent must see themselves as apt targets of reactive attitudes on the basis of those abilities. The reason for this is that my ability to guide, say, my attention is not something I need have beliefs about at all. I can simply guide my attention on the basis of overarching goals I have. I realize that in order to φ, I must shift my attention and so I do. But this does not imply that I think of myself as being responsible for my attention ability or even that I am shifting my attention; may simply think, I need to look over there. Chiefly, the difference derives from Fischer's interest in responsibility and my interest in a broader range of epistemic reactive attitudes. In this sense, when Fischer uses "reactive attitudes" he refers to attitudes concerning or importantly related to responsibility whereas my use is much broader.

When we say a capacity C is reasons-responsive, we might think C must to be responsive in the following way. First, we determine what capacity C was causally sufficient for bringing about some action A and then ask whether given sufficient reasons to act differently if C was operative would the individual act differently (~A). As stated, there is a strong and weak reading of reasons-responsiveness.

> **Strong Reasons-Responsiveness**: A capacity is strongly reasons-responsive just in case given sufficient reason to do ~A then the actual capacity that in fact issues in A would, in an alternative situation most similar to the actual situation, issue in ~A.[244]
>
> **Weak Reasons-Responsiveness:** A capacity is weakly reasons-responsive just in case given sufficient reason to do ~A, then the actual capacity that in fact issues in A would, in some alternative situation, issue in ~A.[245]

Strong reasons-responsiveness is sufficient for responsibility, but not necessary. It fails adequately to capture responsibility in the weak-willed.[246] Even though I might have sufficient reason to do ~A, I might, due to weakness of will, nevertheless still do A. But then we have a case of responsibility without strong reasons-responsiveness.[247] The reasoning applies to more general reactive attitudes as well. Consider Joe's belief that climate change is a hoax. Suppose he came to this belief by an evaluation of the evidence available to him. If Joe would persist in his belief that climate change is a hoax even if presented

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[244] Cf. "Strong reasons-responsiveness obtains when a certain kind K of mechanism actually issues in an action and if there were sufficient reasons to do otherwise and K were to operate, the agent would recognize the sufficient reason to do otherwise and thus choose to do otherwise and do otherwise" (Fischer, *My Way*, 66-7; Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 41).
It is important to note that Fischer's use of "mechanism" does not imply a mechanistic picture of action. As he states, "by 'mechanism' I simply mean 'way'—I do not mean to reify anything" (*ibid*, 17). My use of capacity is relevant to my discussion of abilities.

[245] Cf. "under weak reasons-responsiveness, there must exist *some* possible world in which there is a sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent's actual mechanism operates, and the agent does otherwise. This possible world need not be the one (or ones) in which the agent has a sufficient reason to do otherwise (and that actual mechanism operates), which is (or are) *most similar* to the actual world" (Fischer, *My Way*, 68; Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 44).

[246] Of course, failure to exercise some abilities given strong reasons to do so would not undermine evaluation for that ability. This kind of response really only affects the exercise of abilities in robustly normative domains. For example, we can imagine scenarios in which an individual has strong reasons to throw a curve ball (say, because he knows his friend can't him them at all), but cannot help throwing a fastball (maybe it's a friendly game at park and he really enjoys seeing how hard his friend can hit).

[247] Cf. *ibid*, 67.

sufficient reason to reject this, we are entitled to target him with negative reactive attitudes (e.g., attribute carelessness or close-minded dogmatism to him). But, the capacity (capacities) he manifests in coming to the belief that climate change is a hoax is not strongly reasons-responsive and yet Joe is nevertheless evaluable. Given that strong reasons-responsiveness is unnecessary for reactive evaluability, then, we must mean something different when we say a capacity must be reasons-responsive. The key feature of strong reasons-responsiveness is the idea that the alternative "test" scenario is "most similar to the actual situation." To require we test the operative capacity against situations very close to those in which we actually evaluate the individual invites the problems we have seen with weakness of will, or the relevant epistemic failing. But this makes strong reasons-responsiveness too strong.

Weak reasons-responsiveness is too weak. It seems that we can think of cases, admittedly bizarre, where an individual acts on a weakly responsive capacity and yet remains non-responsible.[248] If Glen irrationally believes that world is going to end at midnight on August 13th, 2017 because the last few cheerios in his cereal seemed to spell "end", we are right to think he is stupid for holding such a belief. Suppose he would not believe this if his cheerios spelled "no". In this case, whatever capacity he manifests in forming his apocalyptic belief is weakly reasons-responsive. Yet, any reactive attitude we direct at Glenn is inappropriate. (Of course, we could, rightly, judge him to be mentally unstable, but this is not to target him with a reactive attitude.)[249]

Thus, a capacity must be reasons-responsive in a way that is neither too strong nor too weak. Call this moderate reasons-responsiveness. In other words, we need only require that

[248] See Fischer and Ravizza (*Responsibility and Control*, ch. 3) for a full discussion what kinds of reasons or patterns of reason recognition are required for moral responsibility.
[249] Fischer, *My Way*, ch. 3 Fn. 11 addresses these kinds of cases. He suggests that either the capacity in the alternative situation is different from the actual sequence capacity or that built into the notion of weak reasons-responsiveness is a constraint on the kinds of reasons that matter. Regardless of how this is settled, moderate reasons-responsiveness is functionally identical to the modified version of weak reasons-responsiveness developed by Fischer

the capacity be reliable. Alternatively, we might say that a capacity is moderately reasons-responsive just in case not too easily would it then fail to issue in action/belief given sufficient reason to do so;[250] in some situations—understood this requires neither that the situations are most similar to the actual situation nor that that there is some possible, perhaps extremely different, situation—where there is sufficient reason to do otherwise, the agent does otherwise. The sufficiency threshold will vary due to the context, the goals and interests one has, and so on. The point generalizes to performances broadly. Hence, a capacity is moderately reasons-responsive just in case not too easily would it then fail to motivate performance given sufficient reason to do so. Of course, we must allow for external factors to intervene; just because I have the capacity to φ it does not follow that I shall successfully φ when I intend to. Sometimes the environment intervenes and sometimes alternative capacities undermine the success of the original capacity.

This is to characterize the sensitivity threshold rather than the nature of reasons-responsiveness. Apart from the *degree* to which a capacity is responsive to reasons, we must briefly comment on what reasons-responsiveness is. To say that a capacity C is responsive to reasons is to say that C (or, more precisely, the manifestation/exercise of C) would be motivated by an awareness of reasons for (against) manifesting/exercising C.[251] To characterize reasons-responsiveness in this way runs the risk of running together genuine reasons-responsiveness and differential stimulus/input response. To clarify, mere capacities and processes are not *reasons*-responsive, though they are responsive to stimuli and inputs.

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[250] This way of thinking about moderate reasons-responsiveness bears striking similarity to Sosa's basis safety requirement in epistemology (*Virtue Epistemology*; *Reflective Knowledge*; *Knowing Full Well*; and *Judgment*). One might think that one's basis of belief must be safe—not too easily fail in producing true belief—in order to have knowledge. My purpose is not to defend Sosa's view of knowledge, but to suggest that there is a place for thinking about cognitive abilities along the lines that Sosa does. Instead of requiring basis safety for knowledge, I suggest that the abilities constitutive of epistemic competence are safe—i.e., moderately reasons-responsive.
[251] Owens, *Reason without Freedom*, 4.

My visual processes react differently to different stimuli. However, knowers are responsive to reasons. Thus, I can be motivated to manifest/exercise a capacity by an awareness of reasons for doing so. Importantly, to have an *ability* to φ is to have a capacity to φ that an individual can be motivated to manifest/exercise by an awareness of reasons for doing so (or, to have a capacity to φ that an individual can be motivated to not manifest/exercise by an awareness of reasons for not doing so).

This distinction helps us to understand better the shift from mere capacities and processes to abilities. Although it seems like we can cultivate, develop, and train cognitive *processes* to be affected by "reasons" differently, this is only apparent. Once we get to the point of being able to affect our cognitive processes in these ways, they become cognitive abilities—processes we exercise or manifest for reasons—rather than processes that are manifest in us. Moreover, mere cognitive capacities/processes are not moved by an awareness of reasons; they are manifest because they are well functioning or not, reliable or not. They are differentially activated by inputs and stimuli. My eye cannot be motivated by an awareness of reasons to be affected by stimuli anymore than can the electric sensor above my grocery store's entrance be motivated by an awareness of reasons to open; the way my eye takes in a stimulus and the electronic sensor causing the door to open (close) is a matter of (mal)functioning.

Since the activation of cognitive processes or capacities is not reasons-responsive, those processes are subject to a different kind of evaluation than the interpersonal reactive attitudes that are the subject of this work. Consider the kinds of evaluations appropriate at an eye exam. In testing my vision, my optometrist determines how well my eyes take in stimuli and not whether my visual system has reasons for "reporting" to me what it takes in. The metaphors here are unfortunately problematic. My eyes, or visual system more generally,

do not report anything. Rather, they take in stimuli, which are interpreted by other systems in my mind. The problems with the metaphor highlight the difference between capacities and abilities. Capacities/processes take in various inputs and give various outputs whereas I exercise my abilities to put those outputs to use. Being in a state of exercising or manifesting a cognitive ability, by contrast, is the kind of thing that can be motivated by an awareness of reasons, e.g., justifying reasons.[252] As such, the kinds of evaluations exercising or manifesting cognitive *abilities* are subject to are the interpersonal reactive attitudes that I am interested in.

This, then, is one necessary condition for guidance control, that the exercise of a cognitive ability be reasons-responsive. Of course, more needs to be said here about the kinds of reasons[253] and the kinds of awareness that are relevant, but what I have said about reasons-responsive thus far is sufficient for the account of cognitive ability as know-how I shall develop below. We now turn to the second necessary condition for guidance control: ownership.

b. Guidance control: ownership

We can see that reasons-responsiveness is not sufficient for guidance control by thinking about alien processes. For example, we can consider Laurence Bonjour's famous example of

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[252] One might object here that processes can be justified as well. For example, we might think that, say, an investigator is unjustified in examining the evidence in twenty-year-old case of fraud in order to solve a current murder investigation. It looks like this process is indeed assessable as justified or not. On closer examination, what we evaluate is not the process of, e.g., attending to and assessing the evidence in the fraud case, but the investigator's exercise of those abilities in the current case. The process is not under scrutiny, the investigator is. In particular, we think that his exercise of those abilities is unjustified. But this is just to say that whatever state(s) he is in that motivated him to look into the fraud case is not justified.

[253] In chapter six I shall argue that epistemic competence is constituted by the ability to believe for normative reasons. This ability is made up of several different nested abilities including attention maintenance, the ability to assess reasons, and the ability to withhold assent. It follows strictly from the ability to assess reasons that I have some awareness of those reasons. Note, this is an ability we have and therefore, by its nature, is dispositional.

Truetemp, a man who unbeknownst to him has a completely reliable tempucomp implant in his brain.[254] It is often argued that even though Truetemp's temperature beliefs are completely accurate due to the total reliability of the tempucomp, he fails to be justified or warranted in those beliefs.[255] In the present context of epistemic reactive attitudes, we might further add that he is exempt from those attitudes as well. As others have pointed out, the problem with Truetemp is not that the belief mechanism is strange, but that it is not integrated into his other cognitive abilities.[256] As it stands, the tempucomp is a capacity or process but not an ability. Notice, that Truetemp could come to have justified or warranted temperature beliefs if, in a sufficient number of cases, he checks his spontaneous beliefs about the ambient temperature with known reliable thermometers. Over time, he will have enough evidence to avow his spontaneous beliefs. But then that process, even if unknown in name to Truetemp, would be an ability of his; in owning the beliefs he would own the process. In this way, the capacity or process would be related to Truetemp in the right way. In other words, in addition to reasons-responsiveness, a cognitive ability (to be an ability and not just a cognitive process) must be owned by the agent. To think through ownership, we can again turn to Fischer (and Ravizza). They offer three conditions necessary and sufficient for ownership of the mechanism(s) of action:[257]

> First, an agent must view himself—when acting from certain mechanisms—as an agent; he must see that certain upshots in the world are the results of his choices and actions. Second, an agent must view himself as an apt target for the reactive

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[254] Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*, 163-164.
[255] It is not accurate to call such spontaneous states beliefs. Ordinarily, we would say such fleeting states are mere thoughts or fancies. Belief requires some kind of endorsement or commitment. My argument here does not turn on whether such states are beliefs or merely fleeting thoughts. Regardless of how one characterizes Truetemp's states, the point I am making about integration holds.
[256] Greco, *Skeptics*, §7.3; *Achieving*, ch 9); and Breyer, D., and J. Greco. "Cognitive Integration and the Ownership of Belief: Response to Bernecker." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76, no. 1 (2008): 173–184.
[257] Again, his purpose is to explain moral responsibility. As such, his conditions will be stronger than those necessary and sufficient for the ownership of a cognitive ability to underwrite epistemic competence.

> attitudes, and … the cluster of beliefs specified by the first two conditions must be based, in an appropriate way, on the individual's evidence.[258]

To have guidance control over our cognitive abilities is not as demanding. While I see no reason to require anything more than moderate responsiveness, the ownership condition on cognitive abilities—one of the conditions that turns a cognitive capacity/process into a cognitive ability—is far less strict. Let us call the three conditions of ownership the agent condition, the apt target condition, and the evidence condition. Accordingly, we get

> **Cognitive Process Ownership**: A subject S owns a cognitive process C if and only if S:[259]
>
> (i) sees herself as exercising/manifesting C or sees herself as doing something that entails exercising or manifesting C (agent condition);
> (ii) thinks of herself as being subject to evaluation on the basis of her exercise/ manifestation of C (apt target condition); and
> (iii) both (i) and (ii) are (at least partially) constitutive of beliefs about herself that are based upon evidence (evidence condition).

Some of these notions are unfortunately, and probably intractably, vague. What exactly does it mean to "see oneself" as exercising/manifesting a cognitive process? Similarly, what does it mean to "think of oneself" as subject to evaluation? These are difficult questions that seem to motivate the evidence condition. After all what else could it mean to see oneself as manifesting a cognitive process other than having a belief about oneself doing so? I think this is too quick. We have certainly experienced being aware of certain things without having beliefs about them. One might retreat to the idea that we have tacit beliefs about them, to be sure, but this is to explain a vague phenomenon with a different vague phenomenon. In any event, rejecting or accepting that we have beliefs about ourselves as manifesting/exercising a cognitive process does not affect the main argument about

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[258] Fischer and Ravizza (*Responsibility and Control*, 238).
[259] In Fischer and Ravizza's terms this would be owning a mechanism of action.

cognitive abilities. If one thinks that we have tacit or implicit beliefs about ourselves that is fine. The real worry is the evidential claim.

If all one means here is that we have justifying reasons for thinking about ourselves in this way, perhaps by manifesting the capacity to take part in the evaluation on the basis of the ability or by offering one's credentials in answer to a challenge, then I am happy to grant that ownership requires evidence. However, if something more robust is meant, then we must part ways. Suppose having evidence means something like information or reasons from which I infer some conclusion from that information. This cannot be a condition on ownership since presumably my ability to infer conclusions on the basis of evidence requires that I have the ability to infer, which requires that I have some evidence for thinking of myself as having, and being an apt target on the basis of exercising, that ability. But I cannot have that ability without evidence about my ability to infer. This is a non-starter. No, there must be (at least) some cognitive abilities that we have—that is, cognitive processes that are moderately reasons-responsive and sufficiently owned—that do not require further cognitive abilities.

(However, if one means only the weaker idea that one has some justifying reasons for seeing oneself as exercising, and being an apt target of evaluations on the basis of, a cognitive process, the first personal experience of seeing oneself that way (the agent condition) is sufficient. Hence, the third condition (the evidence condition) is superfluous. A non-reflective awareness seems necessary and sufficient for one to "see" oneself as exercising or manifesting a cognitive process, notwithstanding.)

One might object to my characterization of ownership on the grounds that it is too demanding. Most individuals do not see themselves as exercising or manifesting cognitive abilities at all. If this is required in order to own a cognitive capacity, then very few

individuals own their capacities, which implies that very few individuals are epistemically competent. The first disjunct of condition (i) above is meant to allay these worries. One need not think of oneself as exercising or manifesting cognitive processes/capacities. Rather, one need only think of oneself as doing something that entails that exercise or manifestation. This also captures the intuitive idea that we take ownership (or are disposed to do so) for the results of that exercise. For example, when I say to you that you should take a different route to get where you are going, a proper response to a challenge about that suggestion is not that I manifested my ability to deduce that your most likely route would be X and then I later tuned into the radio whilst engaging my attention to find that there was a major accident on that route and that I then deduced that a major accident would be an impediment to your likely intention to taking that route. Rather, I would likely simply reply, I heard that there was a major accident on route X, you should probably take route Y to avoid traffic. In this way, I see myself doing something, namely hearing the traffic report, which I take to be a good reason to tell you to go a different route. It should be remembered that whatever it is that underwrites epistemic reactive attitudes—competence—must be general enough to encompass all competent knowers of which the vast majority are not psychologists or philosophers. My account of ownership does this.

I shall proceed, then, by thinking of cognitive abilities as reasons-responsive cognitive processes that are sufficiently owned in the following sense. When we ascribe to someone an ability we imply something about *them*. Specifically, we imply that the processes that make up the ability do not just randomly happen, but that the individual manifests them in the right kind of way with sufficient reliability, with openness to correction, responding to challenges, or having second thoughts, etc. Further, since we are saying something about the individual and not just the process(es) occurring in the individual, we are implying something about the

relationship between the individual and the process; that the individual either sees herself as being related to the process or is actually related to the process in an intimate and deeply ingrained way. This captures the idea that possessing an ability requires that an individual see themselves as being the one who exercises or manifests the process. In so doing, she likewise comes to see herself as being subject to certain kinds of attitudes and evaluations based on (the failure of) such an exercise or manifestation of the process or capacity—whether because she takes herself to be exercising/manifesting the ability or doing something that entails the exercise/manifestation of the ability. In other words, she thinks of herself as having the ability, even if she does not think about it in those terms. What goes for abilities in general, goes for particular kinds of abilities as well.

Of importance here is the idea that seeing ourselves as being capable of exercising or manifesting certain abilities entails that *we* exercise or manifest them. This is nothing more or less than being able to guide a process that is responsive to reasons and owned. Here are a few marks of guidance control over cognitive abilities. First, the exercise of a cognitive ability is deployed to solve problems or meet goals. Abilities are abilities to do something; they have an aim. Cognitive abilities aim at some cognitive goal. It does not matter how coarsely or finely we carve out abilities, it will always be true that what the ability is an ability to do will be fixed by the nature of the it.[260] For example, the ability of attention maintenance will be deployed to solve a multitude of problems (e.g., to find someone in a crowd, to get to the meeting on time, to discover a new book, to complete a puzzle, and so on). Next, for a cognitive ability to be responsive to reasons we require only that the exercise of that ability (or lack thereof) is or would be motivated by an awareness of reasons for (against) its exercise. Keeping in mind the idea that the counterfactual here refers to the

[260] See Millar ("Cognitive Abilities") for discussion of recognitional ability.

exercise or manifestation of the ability as being moderately reasons responsive—i.e., not easily would those reasons fail to motivate it. Finally, guiding one's (cognitive) ability implies that one can keep the ability on track. A young toddler, who may from time to time attend to her environment quite well, cannot guide her ability because she cannot bring it back when other things compete for her attention. So having the ability implies that one can be somewhat resilient in the exercise of it.

The idea that cognitive abilities are cognitive processes an agent exercises guidance control over satisfies intuitions about control and awareness. Obviously, to exercise guidance *control* over cognitive abilities is to exercise a kind of control. So if cognitive ability plays a role in epistemic competence, then so does control. Guidance control also requires ownership that entails awareness. Hence intuitions about awareness and epistemic competence are satisfied as well. Moreover, none of the problems for awareness I raised in chapter three plagues the awareness involved in having a cognitive ability. The central objection to the idea that awareness constitutes epistemic competence is that reactive attitudes are apt in cases of doxastic omission. That is, one can be rightly evaluated for a belief that one does not have and is not aware they should (or for a belief that one has and is not aware that they should not) have. However, if (certain) cognitive abilities constitute epistemic competence, then by the very nature of having a cognitive ability, one meets the ownership condition and therefore has a kind of awareness.

Moreover, doxastic omissions present no problem for reasons-responsiveness either. It might be objected that the appropriateness of reactive attitudes in the light of doxastic omissions likewise undermines my claim that being reasons-responsiveness requires an awareness of reasons that would motivate one to be in the state of manifesting/exercising a cognitive ability. If we think that competence requires reasons-responsiveness, then it seems

there is a tension between aptly evaluated omissions and the fact that competence requires awareness. Careful reading alleviates this tension. If certain kinds of cognitive abilities constitute epistemic competence, then the kind of awareness required for that competence is not of reasons for the belief, but for the *possession* of a cognitive ability via awareness of reasons that favor the exercise or manifestation of a cognitive capacity/process. Cognitive processes/capacities become abilities when they are under our guidance control—reasons-responsive and owned. But, one need not be presently aware of the reasons for a belief in order to be the apt target of evaluations based on it.[261] Rather, one must have relevant cognitive abilities and having or owning those abilities does not entail that one exercise/manifest them in all cases where one is aptly targeted with reactive attitudes. On the contrary, it is precisely because one has the relevant cognitive abilities and failed to manifest them that one is an apt target. For if they did not have the abilities in question, they could hardly be the appropriate targets of attitudes directed at them for failing to manifest them. (Unless, of course, they should have those abilities, but here the appropriate attitude would be directed at them for failing to exercise/manifest a different ability, one whose goal is to cultivate the first ability the individual should have had.) In the next chapter, we shall see that the issue of reasons-responsiveness and awareness arises again but with regard to the ability to recognize and assess reasons. The arguments here will apply *mutatis mutandis* in that context as well.

The resources provided by the notion of guidance control notwithstanding, I have two hurdles to overcome. First, I need to argue that cognitive abilities can be instances of knowledge-how. Second, I need to isolate which cognitive abilities, hence know-how,

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[261] For a related discussion concerning a belief's justification in the light of forgotten evidence see Huemer, Michael. "The Problem of Memory Knowledge," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly,* lxxx (1999): 346–57, and Goldman, Alvin I. "Internalism, Externalism, and the Architecture of Justification." *Journal of Philosophy* 106.6 (2009): 309–338.

constitute epistemic competence. I address the first task in the next section somewhat indirectly by discussing a particular example of a cognitive ability and meeting objections to the idea that in having that ability one also has know-how. With that hurdle overcome, I turn to the second task in the final chapter.

5.3. Cognitive Ability and Know-How: Attention Maintenance

In the previous section, I presented an account of cognitive ability as a capacity/process/faculty that satisfies two jointly sufficient conditions. First, the exercise or manifestation of that capacity is reasons-responsive, and second, that the agent who hosts that capacity is appropriately related to it by virtue of owning it. I now want to argue that cognitive abilities can be instances of knowledge-how. I shall approach this argument somewhat indirectly by focusing on the example of attention maintenance. Specifically, it is argued that the ability to maintain one's attention is a kind of knowledge-how. This is intimated in common practices of ascribing to individuals the knowledge how to attend and it is defended by responding to two families of objections to the idea that basic mental activity—and thus cognitive abilities—can be instances of knowledge-how. Throughout the discussion, I shall also illustrate the possession conditions of cognitive abilities.

I suggested that attention maintenance is an ability to attend to various features of one's environment (and not others). But one might be wary of thinking about attention

maintenance as a cognitive ability in the way I have characterized them. If, as I intend to do, one wants to argue that having the ability to attend is to know how to attend, we need to address potential worries. On the one hand, to ascribe knowledge to someone implies they have acquired something. But, is the ability to attend something we learn how to do? Is there some equivalent to passing from ignorance to knowledge in the case of knowing how to attend? On the other hand, are there not just certain abilities we have that implies only that we can(not) do what it is an ability to do but does not imply that we have a kind of knowledge, even if we do acquire them? Why think of basic mental abilities as kinds of knowledge-how? In particular, what do we gain from thinking about basic cognitive abilities such as attention maintenance as instances of know-how?

These, then, are the two families of objections to my claim that cognitive abilities are instances of know-how: (i) knowledge implies the achievement of a normative status and there is no achievement involved in acquiring basic cognitive abilities, and (ii) since there are abilities that are not instances of know-how, unless one can give principled reason(s) to distinguish between abilities that are from abilities that are not know-how, the ability as know-how claim begs the question. In the remainder of this section I shall address these two objections.[262]

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[262] Allow me to say something against what an intellectualist account of this ability would have to be. Assume that one wants to grant that attention maintenance is a cognitive ability. Then, the intellectualist would have to say that this reduces to or is constituted by propositional attitudes about attending. (Notice that the aspects of attention—recognition, discrimination, and recollection of patterns—only *describe* what happens when one attends and not how to attend.) Whatever these attitudes are, they cannot be about me. So the beliefs, if there are any, about myself as attending as discussed above would not suffice. Rather, the beliefs would have to be about attending. In particular, they would have to be beliefs or other propositional attitudes about how to attend.

Moreover, attempting to explain *how* one attends appeals to concepts or terms that appear to be nothing more than attention. Were I to ask you how do you attend to the situation in which you find yourself, the likely answer would be something along the following lines. All you have to do is focus or concentrate completely/solely/really hard on each item. Indeed, this is how I try to explain how to find things in a look-and-find book to my young daughters. I give them instruction by appealing to the very thing I am trying to instruct them on. One might baulk at this by suggesting that attending to one's situation is different from focusing on it. I am skeptical of this, but suppose we grant it. Now we ask, *how* do you focus? This is no trivial

a. Know-how and achievement

One of the chief motivations behind intellectualist accounts of know-how is the idea that when we ascribe knowledge to someone we imply a genuine cognitive achievement.[263] The honorific 'knowledge' applies to states that have attained a particularly valuable normative status. What's more is that ascribing knowledge implies that one could be in a state of not knowing. In other words, there is an achievement, however small, because one moves from a state of not knowing to a state of knowing, from a less valuable state to a more valuable one; one *acquires* knowledge. The current ability under discussion (as well as similarly basic cognitive abilities) appears to be no more than a process since it is not something we achieve.[264] So the question before us is whether the ability to maintain one's attention can be a genuine cognitive achievement. The answer to which is, yes. It is uncontroversial that we do actually evaluate individuals on their ability to attend. We often talk positively of individuals' attention to detail and employers often seek out individuals who display it. Likewise, we negatively evaluate individuals for failing to attend (either to themselves or to the environment). Even those who would be unwilling to identify the ability to attend as a kind of knowledge would grant that we often do appraise acts (failures) of attention.

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question for those sympathetic to intellectualist know-how. See chapter four above for further discussion of intellectualist know-how.

[263] See Bengson and Moffett (2011b: 165).

[264] Or at least, it is not something we achieve before we become more than epistemically competent. That is, the basic mental activity of attention maintenance is not an ability, but a more robust sense of attention might be. But then, that ability is achieved only after we are already generally epistemically competent. Further, the ability to attend in this way becomes entangled in our background knowledge, our linguistic and semantic competence, and other kinds of abilities. At which point, the ability is neither basic nor easily identified. The putative difference here between basic and non-basic abilities is misleading. It is akin to the difference between the writer's special mastery over language and the young child's "mastery". In the case of language, it is appropriate to say both that the child and writer have the ability to speak English, e.g., and to say that they both *know how* to speak English. As we saw in §4.3c, the knowledge-how just is the ability. Additionally, why think there is only one ability exercised or manifested in the two cases? It seems more likely that the writer has several different abilities deployed. Perhaps these are no more than fine-grained descriptions of the general ability, but it seems more likely that there are distinct abilities related to or that enhance the basic ability of speaking English.

The practice of evaluating individuals on the basis of their acts (failures) of attention suggests that it is something that can be achieved. Why should we be concerned to evaluate such episodes if we could not, in our evaluations, hope to influence the individual our appraisals are aimed at? When I try to correct my six-year-old about her failure of attention, I am attempting to get her to attend better the next time, which implicates an ability to do so. Furthermore, this ability can be trained and cultivated in extremely sophisticated ways. Art historians can see immediately whether a particular work is genuine by attending to certain features of the work. Often, these features can be unbelievably subtle (such as a particular brush stroke in one very specific area of the work). To do this, not only must she be able to recognize what particular brush strokes look like—a distinct ability involving background knowledge—she must be able to attend to the line and shade of the stroke itself—a subtly developed ability to attend to the color and shade pattern before her. What happens here is that she exercises her attention in a very acute way. But then, the difference between the seasoned Art Historian's ability to attend and, say, the child who is just learning to do so is only a matter of degree. So, the extent we are willing to attribute knowing how to attend to the Art Historian—and not just knowing how to spot a forgery—is the extent we ought to be willing to attribute knowing how to attend to the child as well (assuming she does have that ability, no matter if she just reaches the threshold).

As a final note on this point, we might think that there was no time when we could not attend and thus the ability to attend is not something we acquired. To which I respond, the fact that we do not remember acquiring the ability to attend does not entail that we did not acquire it. In fact, evidence for the fact that we did is that we can, once we have the basic ability, further develop and train it. Developmental psychology attests to this as well.[265] The

[265] See Ruff and Rothbert (2001) for an extended treatment of attention from infants to children age five.

idea that mere abilities could not amount to know-how, if based on the assumption that knowledge is an achievement, is simply false. One need not even defend the more controversial claim that knowledge is not any kind of achievement to arrive at this. Rather, the fact that we can develop and train mere abilities suggests both that they are acquired and achieved. As such, mere abilities can and do achieve the normative status of knowledge.

b. Abilities that constitute know-how

The next objection, that the attempt to characterize attention maintenance as a kind of knowledge simply misuses that term or misapplies that concept, cuts a bit deeper. I suspect this way of thinking about our basic abilities (either cognitive or otherwise) is likewise rooted in either tacit/explicit commitment to intellectualism or, as we have seen, the denial that basic acts/activities deserve the honorific "knowledge". Those who reject the ability to attend as a kind of knowledge-how because of prior theoretical commitments to intellectualism simply beg the question.[266] So, let us focus our attention (pun intended) on the second motivation behind the rejection.

Exercising some abilities appears to be the kind of thing it is appropriate to describe as knowing how to do, while exercising others does not appear to be the kind of thing it is appropriate to describe as an instance of knowledge-how. Sighted individuals have the ability to see (while blind individuals do not have that ability), but it does not seem right to say that sighted individuals *know how* to see while blind individuals *do not know how* to see. Of course, John may use his ability to see in another kind of act where it would be right to say he knows

[266] See Chapter 4 for my defense of modest anti-intellectualism.

how, though. For example, John knows how to find out if it is raining by seeing if it is. It would appear that some abilities are not know-how, even if they are necessary for other kinds of know-how. What distinguishes abilities that are mere abilities from those that are know-how?

Recall the account offered above. To have an ability, and not just a process within us, we must be able to exercise guidance control over it—thus it must be reasons-responsive and owned.[267] Even basic activity requires guidance control. The activity of idly drumming one's fingers is something we do, even if it is not a piece of full-blown intentional behavior. The basic activity of attention maintenance, likewise, requires guidance control. That is, in order for attention maintenance to count as an ability one must be able (reliably) to exercise guidance control over the capacity to attend. We have already seen that this is something we acquire, develop, and train. As such, we can (and do) exercise guidance control over attention. I submit, therefore, that the demarcation between abilities that could be know-how and those that couldn't (or, at least, those it would not be appropriate to think of as know-how) lies in guidance control. Those we exercise such control over are know-how abilities, while those we do (not) exercise such control over are, for lack of a better term, mere process abilities.[268] More precisely, the difference is between abilities and processes/capacities.[269]

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[267] This forestalls Stanley and Williamson-type (2001) objections that point to abilities to, e.g., digest food not implying know-how. My digestive system manifests the process of digesting food and in that sense is able to digest food, but I cannot exercise guidance control over this process and so I do not have this ability.
[268] Notice the difference between exercising some kind of control over seeing by, say, closing one's eyes as opposed to exercising control over perceiving, say, by attending to particular features of the puzzle piece to determine if the colors and shades match up to the one next to it. In the first case, I block the mere the process from operating. In the second, I manifest/exercise a constellation of abilities to determine whether the pieces fit. Additionally, the former case is conceptually thin, whereas the latter case is conceptually thick.
[269] I do not say they are just processes because we do use the term "ability" to describe them. It is important to note, however, that the concept the term expresses in this case is not the concept of an ability in the sense relevant for understanding basic know-how.

When we use "ability" when discussing processes/capacities, the sense of that term is tied up with the modal auxiliaries 'can' and 'could'; when we use "ability" in a way that implicates guidance control, the term refers to something like a skill. That the sighted individual has the ability to see does not mean that the sighted individual has the skill of seeing, but instead has the sense of "can see" or "is able to see." Once we recognize this, the distinction is not between abilities that are and those that are not know-how, but between abilities that are know-how and processes/capacities that are not.

If this is right, sight is not an ability, but a capacity or process. I do not exercise guidance control over my sight since it is not reasons-responsive. My manifestation of sight—taking in various stimuli—is not motivated by reasons that would count in favor of being visually appeared to. Even though I have really strong reasons to believe that the stick is not bent I cannot help but see it as bent. Sight is a capacity that is manifest in me due to my interactions in the world, but it is not something *I* manifest or exercise. By contrast, I do have a *perceptual* ability. What I perceive is guided by me because it involves reasons that count in its favor. I exercise perception to solve problems and to attain goals. Sight is the modular process of taking in stimuli whereas perception is the ability to interpret and use that stimuli. I conclude that basic mental activity, like attention maintenance, can become cognitive abilities and hence instances of know-how.[270]

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[270] I say can become because the fact that an individual attends to her circumstances does not entail that she has the cognitive ability to attend. This is due to three possible reasons. First, she may not have developed it yet. A young child two years of age may attend to the features of her visual field when searching for an item in a look-and-find book, but fail to transfer that attention over when attempting to put together a puzzle. Hence, an episode of attention may not be indicative of the possession of the cognitive ability to attend. The condition of ownership must be satisfied before a mere process becomes a cognitive ability. Second, attributing the ability to attend varies according to our goals and practical interests (See Greco 2007a and §5.2.1 above). I may attribute the ability to my six-year-old when speaking of her ability to put together puzzles, find people, and so on even though she fails spectacularly at attending to her surroundings when she is playing a with stick outside. She may reliably (almost) hit those around her and be completely oblivious to this fact. So, my interests in attributing the ability to her affects how and when I do so. Finally, abilities are surely threshold concepts. An individual can manifest the cognitive act/activity without thereby having the ability because she falls just under the threshold. Whether or not she meets the threshold is, again, a matter of our goals and interests in the

To summarize the argument of this section, beliefs are the result of the exercise or manifestation of cognitive processes. Some of these processes are such that we can exert a kind of control over them, guidance control. We exercise guidance control over a process when it can be motivated by an awareness of reasons that count for (against) its exercise and it is sufficiently owned—we see ourselves as exercising these abilities (or doing something that entails the exercise of the ability). When we are capable of exercising guidance control over a capacity or process it becomes an ability that we can (at least try to) exercise according to our goals or reasons. At which point we then have the relevant knowledge-how. Hence, some abilities just are knowledge-how.

Conclusion

Allow me to summarize the argument thus far. After clarifying the question of epistemic competence, I turned to the negative project of repudiating two possible candidate answers. In rejecting doxastic control and doxastic awareness as the ground of apt evaluation, one of my chief complaints was the idea that attempting to explain epistemic attributability in terms of control and awareness failed to adequately address the deep and holistic ways we evaluate others. Moreover, not even if we try to account for attributability by requiring both control and awareness can we capture the nuanced and wide-ranging reactive attitudes we deploy in our common practices. This led to the idea that what accounts for our epistemic competence

attribution. However, it should be noted, that even here there will be norms that proscribe attributing abilities simply because we want to.

must be some deep and integrated feature(s) of our cognitive capacities. Given this, a natural place to look would be our cognitive virtues.

These virtues, by their very nature, are: reasons-responsive, stable and reliable dispositions and traits of epistemic agents the manifestation/exercise of which express evaluative judgments—i.e., express our tacit judgments and commitments to having true beliefs, wanting to guide our inquiries by a desire to believe things for the right reasons and in the right way, and so forth—that individuals can cultivate and develop over time. Epistemic virtues (conceived as abilities cultivated from natural or hard-wired capacities and integrated with other abilities) are exactly the features about an individual that ground apt evaluation. They influence not only what, but also how, we believe and since they are stable features of the individual who possesses them, reactive attitudes are appropriate even in cases where they fail to be exercised or manifest. Recent work in virtue epistemology has been more comfortable with discussing such intellectual virtues as cognitive or intellectual abilities and so I followed suit. Although cognitive abilities suggest a natural ground for epistemic competence, asserting this is a far cry from explaining how they do so.

I then turned to the positive project of this work. In order to explain how cognitive abilities underwrite epistemic evaluability, I needed to clear away potential objections and lay the appropriate groundwork. Since I want to argue that certain cognitive abilities are constitutive of knowing how to know and that knowing how to know is necessary and sufficient for epistemic competence, I defended the claim that some knowledge-how is constituted by an ability (or abilities). Finally, in this chapter, I presented two central arguments. First, I argued that cognitive abilities are capacities or processes or faculties that a subject can exercise guidance control over. And, second, I demonstrated that cognitive abilities can be instances of knowledge-how. We are now in a position to argue for the final

two claims of this dissertation: that certain cognitive abilities ground the appropriateness of reactive attitudes and having those abilities is knowing how to know.

6. Knowing How to Know

The goal of this chapter is to present my account of epistemic competence as a kind of ability-constituted knowledge-how. As I have suggested, a subject knows how to know just in case she has the ability to recognize, attend to, and assess normative reasons—i.e., justifying reasons—for belief as well as the ability to revise her belief on the basis of that assessment. The argument proceeds in three steps. First, in §6.1, I begin by presenting four features this ability must have. It must be a: (i) reasons-responsive, (ii) meta-level cognitive ability (iii) that is capable of influencing belief (formation) (iv) owned by the subject. I next discuss several cognitive abilities and argue that these ground epistemic reactive attitudes in §6.2. My focus in §6.3 is that the abilities that ground reactive attitudes constitute knowing how to know. Finally, in §6.4, I test my theory of epistemic competence against several of the recurring cases I have raised throughout this work.

6.1. Desiderata for Epistemic Competence

The discussions of control and awareness in chapters two and three point to different features of epistemic competence. Although we do not exercise control over our beliefs we do nevertheless influence them. Moreover, our ability to influence belief seems to play a role in connecting us to our beliefs (or lack thereof in the case of doxastic omissions). This suggests that epistemic competence is (partially) explained by the abilities we (fail to) exercise that causally influence what we believe. Another clue is provided by reflection on the role of awareness in epistemic competence and doxastic omissions. If one can rightly be targeted with evaluations in cases of doxastic omissions,[271] the implication is that one could (and should) have exercised one's cognitive abilities but failed to do so. In other words, the exercise of the cognitive abilities causally responsible for belief formation must be sensitive to the reasons for their exercise. Alternatively, *we* must be sensitive to the reasons for exercising those cognitive abilities. Background beliefs, the environment, and awareness of our cognitive capabilities fix whether or not to exercise relevant cognitive abilities. If we construe these broadly as reasons, then we can conclude that epistemic competence requires a kind of sensitivity or responsiveness to reasons. In a case where one is simply incapable of being moved by different reasons to form different beliefs or to exercise the cognitive abilities that produce beliefs, one seems to be exempt from epistemic reactive attitudes on the basis of that (those) belief(s). I have already said what it means to be responsive to reasons in §5.2a.

Two additional features of epistemic competence come from further reflection. In the first place, responsiveness to reasons does not require that one actually exercise a particular cognitive ability or faculty. Since we can be subject to evaluation on the basis of beliefs we (fail to) acquire without exercising the relevant ability, it follows that those evaluations are

[271] See §3.1b for my discussion of doxastic omission and the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes.

grounded in the mere possession of the relevant ability. If an individual does not have the relevant ability, then they can hardly be faulted for (failing to) form the belief in question.[272] Alternatively, if an individual does have the ability but fails to exercise it, we rightly fault them for that failure precisely because they should have (and hence could have) exercised the relevant ability. So possession (or, more precisely ownership)[273] of certain cognitive abilities is what matters for epistemic competence.

In the second place, recall the distinction between cognitive abilities and capacities/processes discussed in §5.2. A cognitive ability is a capacity/process the exercise or manifestation of which is responsive to reasons by the agent who owns it. But this is not to imply that all cognitive abilities constitute epistemic competence. The abilities constitutive of epistemic competence must be general enough that all (properly functioning) mature humans have them, but specific enough so as not to include the noncompetent. Our brief discussion above concerning capacities and abilities points us in the right direction. The role of some of our cognitive abilities is to guide other cognitive abilities. These second-order, or meta-level, abilities act as a check on the deliverances of our first-order capacities and abilities. Exercising them leads to endorsement, rejection, adjustment, and so on. If this is right, then these abilities are precisely what are necessary for epistemic competence. Individuals whose second-order abilities are inefficacious, whose first-order cognitive abilities override all else are nothing more than epistemic wantons.[274]

I submit, therefore, that the abilities constitutive of epistemic competence must have the following four features: they must be reasons-responsive, second-order abilities that causally

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[272] Unless, of course, they ought to have had the ability. In which case, the failing is traceable to the (failure) to exercise a different ability.
[273] The idea of ownership is developed in §5.2b above.
[274] See Frankfurt ("Identification and Wholeheartedness," in Frankfurt, Harry. *The Importance of What We Care About*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988): §3) for an analogous discussion of moral wantonness.

influence belief and are owned by the subject. Since the concept of a cognitive ability contains reasons-responsiveness and ownership, we can instead focus on the remaining two desiderata. The cognitive abilities I propose as constituting epistemic competence will be shown to be abilities of the second-order that causally influence not only what, but also how, we acquire beliefs.

6.2. Cognitive Ability, Epistemic Competence, and Knowing How to Know

In this section, I complete my argument that knowing how to know is constituted by an executive cognitive ability, the ability to believe for normative reasons (ANR). This ability is itself constituted by three nested abilities, the abilities to recognize and assess (justifying) reasons for belief, and the ability to revise belief according to the reasons and evidence for (against) it. The rough idea is that one knows how to know just in case one would be motivated to form (withhold/modify/reject) beliefs by an awareness of the reasons for (against) them; it is to be able to recognize and assess the normative reasons in favor of belief as well as to revise one's belief. Throughout the discussion, we shall see that what underwrites epistemic reactive attitudes is ANR and thus knowing how to know. Cognitive abilities entail ownership, doxastic influence, and reasons-responsiveness. ANR is an executive or second-order ability that operates on the deliverances of first-order abilities. Hence, if I can show that ANR underwrites the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes, then I will have an account of epistemic competence that explains our intuitions

about control and awareness via a meta-level or second-order reasons-responsive cognitive ability, capable of influencing belief, that the subject owns.

a. Knowing how to know: some preliminary remarks

In an effort to forestall some possible objections, I should like to clear away a few potential roadblocks. First, contrary to appearances, the idea of believing for reasons does not imply we have control over belief. We exercise control over cognitive abilities that form beliefs. To exercise these abilities is to engage in the activity of believing. Second, the role of awareness plays out on two levels: the ownership condition required for guidance control—and hence cognitive abilities—and a modal requirement on the reasons that (would) move one to believe if one were aware of them. This role of awareness is more about the nature of the reasons for belief than about the nature of the awareness involved. Third, to suggest that we have an ability to believe for normative reasons is to contrast normative reasons with other kinds of reasons. The discussion of control and awareness in the previous section, with the brief remarks above, should be sufficient to allay any worries about doxastic voluntarism as well as putative objections to the nature and role of awareness in epistemic competence. I shall therefore turn to the third point concerning the kinds of reasons involved in belief formation.

In recent years, philosophers have become increasingly interested in the role that reasons play in belief formation and justification along the lines of the role that reasons play in the

motivation and justification of action.[275] Of particular interest is the distinction between motivating and normative reasons. Briefly, a motivating reason for φ-ing is a reason that moves one to φ. If you like, it is a reason that causes one to φ. A normative reason to φ counts in favor of (against) φ-ing. In the context of belief, a motivating reason to believe that P moves one to believe that p whereas a normative reason to believe that P is a reason that counts in favor of believing that P.[276] In other words, a normative reason is a justifying reason.[277]

I want to call reasons that move one to belief motivating reasons because it highlights the fact that merely believing something for a reason is not sufficient for epistemic competence. An individual may have a reason to believe that P, have a pro-attitude toward that reason, believe on the basis of that reason, provide that reason as an explanation as to why she believes it, and yet still be non-competent.[278] There are different ways this may occur. Young children form such beliefs quite often; for example, my daughter may believe that Mama will be home soon because I told her so. If asked when is your Mama coming

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[275] see Reisner, Andrew, and Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen. *Reasons for Belief.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[276] We should be careful not to confuse another distinction that epistemologists use with this one. Epistemologists speak of doxastic and propositional justification for belief. The orthodox view of the latter concerns not the reasons on the basis of which one believes but whether those reasons justify the belief. The former concerns only the reasons on the basis of which a subject believes. For detailed discussion of the doxastic vs. propositional justification distinction see Turri, John. "On the Relationship between Propositional and Doxastic Justification." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 80, no. 2 (2010): 312–326; Engel, Mylan. "Personal and Doxastic Justification in Epistemology." *Philosophical Studies* 67, no. 2 (1992): 133–150; Williams, *Problems*: 21-25).

[277] I am not completely comfortable with using "justifying" reason. Since competence requires assessing reasons for or against a belief, some of the reasons are not justifying reasons, but undermining or detracting reasons. Nevertheless, they are normative in that they provide motivation to withhold/modify/reject a belief.

[278] One may argue that whatever that state is in such a case it is not a belief. At least, it is not what we mean by belief when we speak of individuals being apt targets of evaluation on the basis of beliefs. Call them "ur-beliefs". Ur-beliefs are analogically related to competent beliefs and we *treat* them as beliefs for pedagogical purposes in order to train, e.g., children to be full-blown epistemic agents.

Contrary to appearances, this presents no real challenge to the present point. Either, they are beliefs, but not the kind that we can be evaluated on the basis of, in which case we still need to explain what it is about evaluable beliefs that is different from beliefs formed for mere motivating reasons; or, they are ur-beliefs, in which case we still need an explanation of evaluable beliefs—proper belief. Either way, that state produced by mere motivating reasons is contrasted with evaluable belief.

home, she would likely reply, "very soon". If pressed why she thinks this, she would likely reply, "papa told me." Or perhaps it may be the case that one has been brainwashed into having pro-attitudes towards certain reasons. And, if the individual is not culpable for the brainwashing, the resultant belief is motivated by the pro-attitude towards the reason and yet she remains exempt from evaluation. Note, this may be true even if she is otherwise evaluable; perhaps she has been brainwashed in one particular domain of reasons, but in most others she is generally competent.

It is, however, a bit odd to contrast motivating reasons with normative reasons for the simple fact that all reasons are normative. When one explains belief in terms of reasons, one is, at least, implying that those reasons rationalize the belief; they make the belief, in some sense, appropriate to have rather than simply describing how it came about. What is more, there is oddness in the other direction. To suggest that one believes that P for the normative reason R is to suggest that R is one's motivating reason to believe that P. After all, motivating reasons move one to believe and, in this case, R moves one to believe that P. Finally, I characterized normative reasons in terms of what seem to be pro-attitudes. If a normative reason to believe that P is a reason that counts in favor of believing that P, how is this different from the pro-attitudes involved in being moved to believe that p?

The sense of "normative" in the ability to believe for *normative* reasons is not meant to imply that motivating reasons are not also in some sense normative. It is rather to highlight norm recognition. I take it that a minimal condition on epistemic competence is to be able to recognize and be moved by norms governing belief formation. Recall, the norms I have in mind are quite general. Equally clear is the fact that one could be moved to belief both without recognizing the relevant norms governing the formation of that particular belief and without even having the ability to recognize those norms. Nevertheless, there is a sense

of "normative" and "reason" that applies when speaking of mere motivating reasons. The aforementioned example of my daughter's belief about when her mother is coming home is a case in point. When one believes for a normative reason in my sense, by contrast, part (or perhaps all) of the explanation is that one is moved to belief because the reason conforms to the relevant norms (for example, norms concerning motivations to believe true things, or norms concerning ruling out relevant inconsistent possibilities, or norms requiring weighing of real probabilities, and so on;[279] one's pro-attitude toward the reason for belief is grounded in some (often tacit) recognition that believing is acceptable, permissible, obligatory, expressive of careful thought, measured, rational, and so on. Note, it is sufficient (and necessary) that one only have the ability to believe for normative reasons not that they exercise it in the particular case.

We can illustrate this further by returning to the example from chapter three of Joe, our Fox News-loving climate science denier. Joe's belief that P is motivated by his beliefs (and perhaps conative states) about Fox News. That is, what causes Joe to believe that climate change is a hoax is his trust in Fox News. So his motivating reason(s) to believe that climate change is a hoax is his implicit and dogmatic trust in Fox News. However, there are normative reasons that Joe does not possess that count against this belief. For example, the fact, if it is a fact, that Fox News is an unreliable news source. If we assume that Joe is a generally competent adult, then it is because his motivating reasons for belief do not conform to the norms of belief formation that we find fault with him, because he is

[279] Of course, an individual need not explicitly think in these terms. More often than not, in the course of ordinary development, we swallow these guiding norms down as consequences of other things. As such, we have a general awareness that we want to avoid wishful thinking and base our beliefs on good reasons (i.e., reasons that increase the likelihood that our belief is true), or that we need to rule out claims inconsistent with our own. None of this need be consciously endorsed; the general practice of acquiring beliefs is typically governed by such norms and our conforming to those norms happens more or less automatically. Where one's ability to believe for normative reasons—be governed by belief norms—is on greatest display is when something goes wrong. Competent individuals revise their beliefs (again, conforming to a belief norm) when they recognize something is amiss.

blinkered in his attitude towards Fox News we evaluate him critically. Since he could so easily discover that Fox is unreliable and yet refuses to do so we rightly target him with reactive attitudes. Here is another fact Joe does possess that counts as a normative reason for rejecting the climate change belief (or at the very least withholding it): he does not understand the arguments about climate change.[280] This is a normative reason that we are right to insist should factor into his forming the belief.[281] That it does not evinces his problematic disposition towards belief acquisition.

So, epistemic competence requires that we have the ability—reliably to succeed at achieving the end of that ability across a sufficient range of situations when intending to—to believe for normative reasons. This suggests that we have the ability to align our motivating and normative reasons. How do we do this? I intimated above that the governing ability to believe for normative reasons is constituted by three other abilities. And now we are in a position to see what those are.

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[280] We need to be careful here. I am not claiming that Joe is subject to negative reactive attitudes merely because he trusts an unreliable source he has not checked out. Rather, I am suggesting that Joe is sufficiently aware that there is a heated debate about climate change, he is aware that he does not understand the arguments or data being presented either by those who affirm climate change or those who deny it or even why those data matter, and yet he still denies climate change because of his implicit trust in Fox News. It is one thing to implicitly trust a news source without ever having checked on it. It is another to trust that source on topics that one is not even passingly adept at understanding. This would be true of an individual forming beliefs on the basis of reliable sources on subject matters that are beyond the pale for them. For example, it would be misleading (at best, and flat out wrong, at worst) of me to pass myself off as knowing, e.g., Godel's incompleteness theorems since no matter how hard I try, I simply do not understand either what the theorems are, what their proofs are, or how to go about proving them. Even if I just sat in a course where we discussed the theorems and went over those proofs in detail, I should not think that I know them.

[281] The fact that it does not factor into his belief formation even though he has that reason points towards a solution to nonculpable doxastic omissions and how we might still be evaluated on the basis of them. See §6.4 below for further discussion.

b. The ability to believe for normative reasons

In order to align our motivating and normative reasons for belief, we must have the ability to revise our beliefs in light of the reasons for (against) them. If there were no way to do so then we would be completely subject to the vicissitudes of whatever our subpersonal cognitive faculties and processes delivered. What is entailed by having this ability? Primarily it involves the ability to *assess* reasons and evidence in favor of those beliefs and this requires we have the ability to recognize and attend to those reasons and that evidence. So the ability to *recognize* and *attend* to reasons and evidence is nested in the ability to *assess* reasons and evidence. The ability to *assess* reasons and evidence is nested in the ability to *revise* belief. And finally, the ability to *revise* belief is constitutive of the ability to believe for normative reasons.[282]

The ability to *attend* to reasons/evidence partially constitutes the ability to *assess* reasons and evidence. Two questions remain. What is the ability to *assess* reasons/evidence an ability to do and what else besides an ability to attend is required? Answering the first question will point us in the direction of what is needed to answer the second. Let us approach this by thinking through an example.

> **Murder**: David's body is found in his locked car inside his closed garage with the windows slightly cracked open and the car running. The police take this to be an open and shut case of suicide and are about to rule it as such, when they realize that the driver's side seat is pulled uncomfortably close for David's 6'3" frame. Later, it is discovered that David did not die of carbon monoxide poisoning, but instead he froze from inside out after ingesting liquid nitrogen. All evidence pointed to David's wife, especially when it was revealed that she was having an affair, stood to gain a significant amount of money from life insurance, and her credit card was used to purchase the thermos used to deliver the liquid nitrogen. However, the lead

[282] To be clear, having the ability to attend to the features of a situation—the reasons and evidence for (against) belief—is different than *de facto* attending to one's situation. The epistemically non-competent may very often attend to the relevant features of a situation and reliably form accurate beliefs because of it. For example, small children can reliably form accurate beliefs about who is in the room with them and even demonstrate this through reports (say, by calling out to different individuals), but they may lack the ability to attend.

> investigator, Tony, reexamines the evidence and finds that the wife could not have purchased the thermos. He sees that the wife's stepdaughter from a previous marriage used the card by examining the security footage of the store. This leads him to find that if the wife were to be sent to prison, the stepdaughter's trust fund would immediately open.

What is going on here? Obviously, Tony manifests his ability to attend to the evidence, which explains why he decides to reexamine it. But, he also must have thought something was amiss, else why reexamine it? This suggests an awareness of his degree of confidence and/or an awareness of some kind of standard, of which he fell short. Further, why would his awareness of his confidence cause him to reexamine the evidence if he did not think that his lack of confidence was an indication of not meeting an appropriate standard? And if this is right, it seems that one must be aware of standards that govern belief. I raise this point because it appears it might threaten the view I am advocating since it may imply that one must possess propositional knowledge about norms and standards in order to know how to assess one's reasons and evidence. Allow me to set this aside in order to continue the discussion about the abilities constitutive of ANR. I shall return to it at the end of §6.2c below.

The ability to assess reasons is related to another cognitive ability, the ability to revise belief in light of the reasons/evidence that count in its favor (or against it). The latter ability appears to be manifest in the ability to assess reasons. If a set of reasons points to a particular conclusion and yet we are unsure (for whatever reason), not only does this lead us to assess our reasons, it just is an episode of revising belief—in this case withholding until more reasons are in favor. Whenever an individual is in a state of not believing that P and not believing that not-P when she considers whether P, she is withholding a belief that P. To be in that state is tantamount to not being moved to believe that P and not being moved to believe that not-P. A state of withholding belief might be brought about in one of two ways:

either no reasons that a subject has are sufficient to motivate belief or the reasons that one has one finds insufficient to motivate belief. In the former case, one's subpersonal processes and faculties simply do not induce belief. In the latter case, one occurrently thinks about the claim and the reasons for it but finds no reason strong enough to induce belief. And, of course, this can come in different degrees; I might think that P is more likely than not-P, but not enough to induce full-blown belief. Withholding belief is just one particularly salient way we revise our beliefs. We also adjust our level of confidence and even reject belief altogether.

These three distinct abilities—the ability to attend to reasons and evidence, the ability to assess reasons and evidence, and the ability to revise one's belief in light of those reasons and that evidence—greatly influence what and how we believe. Separately, they play a significant role in belief formation, but together they form an ability that acts as a kind of check and balance to the deliverances of our first-order cognitive capacities. Why consider this to be a separate ability at all? Simply put, because very many of our abilities, cognitive and otherwise, are constituted by other abilities. For example, the ability to play chess is constituted by a constellation of abilities including recognitional abilities, movement abilities, and so on.

I call the ability constituted by the abilities to recognize, assess, and revise belief the ability to believe for normative reasons (ANR), or a general reasons-responsiveness within the domain of belief formation. More accurately, one believes for normatively assessable reasons. Reasons are inextricably bound up with interpersonal interactions; they are given and taken to support or undermine claims of knowledge. As such, the reasons themselves can be subject to the same kinds of questions and challenges as the original claim.

I shall now argue that this ability is necessary and sufficient for epistemic competence by thinking about each of the constituent abilities and the appropriateness of reactive attitudes.

In other words, to establish the necessity of ANR, let us imagine cases where reactive attitudes are appropriate and abstract away each of the more basic abilities to show that reactive attitudes would be inapt. To establish the sufficiency of ANR, we simply ask what else could be required.

c. The necessity of ANR

The inability to recognize reasons for belief in general entails that normative evaluation centered on the social epistemic practice of giving (or being prepared to give) reasons to support one's claim to knowledge is inappropriate. The inability to assess reasons for belief, in general, entails that individual would be unable to think of a reason as good or bad and therefore unable to recognize normative standards governing belief. In other words, it entails that being unable to meet belief norms, the individual is not subject to epistemic constraints and thus not subject to the evaluations arising from those norms. Finally, the general or global inability to revise belief in light of assessing one's reasons for belief reduce one to purely mechanistic or subpersonal "belief" systems. Allow me to illustrate each of these points.

If an individual is globally unable to recognize reasons for believing something, no reactive attitude could be appropriate. In such a case, the individual is only capable of objective attitudes, clinical evaluation and the like. This leaves the abilities to assess reasons and to revise belief in light of that assessment. I am unclear what it would mean to be able to recognize reasons and revise belief, but not assess those reasons globally. Of course, in particular situations we may recognize that P is a reason to believe that Q, but not be in a

position to assess whether P is a good reason to believe that Q. For example, I may recognize that current understanding of quantum physics gives me reason to reject a belief in a deterministic universe, but due to my lack of understanding of quantum physics not be able to defend my belief or revise that belief in light of an assessment of current views on quantum physics. Presumably, I would hold my belief about the indeterministic nature of the universe rather tentatively though since I could recognize that my lack of understanding of quantum physics undermines my ability to defend my beliefs about indeterminism. But, if I did not have the ability to assess reasons for belief, in general, I could never believe *for* good or right reasons. Being unable to assess whether a reason was good or bad, I would effectively be unable to recognize reasons for belief.

Lastly, the inability to revise belief, again globally or in general, makes epistemic evaluations inapt. If I believe that P, if I do not have the ability to revise my belief in the light of new evidence, say, then I will always believe that P. My belief that P becomes hard-wired. But, if there is a global inability to revise my beliefs, then all of my beliefs are thus hard-wired. Moreover, belief formation then becomes a matter merely of subpersonal processes and I contribute nothing. It is hard to see how I can be subject to reactive attitudes when I am not involved in the formation of the belief.

In addition to these general points, reflection on the lack of one or more of these abilities in young children also explains why epistemic reactive attitudes are inappropriate (either globally in very young children, or locally within different domains in older children). An older child may be able to see that P is a reason for Q in some domains, but due to a failure to understand something in another domain fail to see that P* is a reason for Q*. For example, we would be wrong negatively to evaluate a seventh-grade child who is just learning pre-algebra about his failure to believe that Russell's paradox gives us good reason to favor

axiomatic set theory over naive set theory. In the absence of compelling argument against the necessity of the ability to believe for normative reasons, I shall proceed to the sufficiency of this ability for epistemic competence.

d. The sufficiency of ANR

The question of the sufficiency of ANR for epistemic competence concerns whether, in addition to ANR, anything else is required to ground the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes. One might think that since epistemic competence is a competence in knowing—i.e., the epistemically competent are competent *knowers*—that what is required over and above ANR to ground reactive evaluability is an ability to fulfill a subset (or all) of the epistemic conditions on knowledge. My strategy will be to argue that ANR reliably yields the fulfillment of conditions on knowledge or that one's belief need not fulfill that condition in order for one to be an apt target of epistemic reactive attitudes. Either way, there is nothing over and above ANR required for epistemic competence. Thus, ANR is also sufficient.

Recall that to have an ability to φ one must be sufficiently reliable at achieving the goal of φ-ing when trying. So an individual has the ability to believe for normative reasons just in case she is sufficiently reliable at recognizing, attending to, and assessing reasons for belief and revising beliefs in the light of the assessment of those reasons. To determine whether this is sufficient for reactive evaluability, we must ask whether manifesting/exercising ANR is sufficient reliably to achieve knowledge. Notice this is not to commit myself to reliabilism; a reliability constraint on knowledge does not entail that knowledge just is reliably caused true

belief. As I have already argued cognitive abilities require ownership and this entails a kind of awareness of the manifestation/exercise of a capacity, even if that awareness is merely tacit (or, even if there is no occurrent awareness for a particular belief). Nevertheless, if an individual periodically and inconsistently arrives at the truth—if she is unreliable at arriving at the truth, assuming she is not the victim of an evil deceiver who manipulates the world to make it turn out that she does not arrive at the truth—it is not accurate to ascribe knowledge to her, at least for the kinds of knowledge that implicate epistemic competence. Suppose knowledge is constituted by true belief plus some further truth-conducive factor (or factors). When we ask whether anything other than ANR is required reliably to yield knowledge, we are asking either whether ANR reliably fulfills these conditions or whether it need to. Hence, if believing for normative reasons can plausibly be thought to be the truth-conducive factor of knowledge, or, if believing for normative reasons can plausibly be thought reliably to fulfill that condition, then *having the ability* to believe for normative reasons (as opposed to *manifesting/exercising* the ability to believe for normative reasons) will be sufficient for competence.

Pretty obviously, the manifestation/exercise of ANR reliably yields the belief condition. Also obvious is the fact that failure of the exercise of ANR to reliably fulfill the truth condition does not detract from competence. Whether a belief is true or not is largely out of my hands (absent world-state-tracking beliefs discussed in §2.2b). So the fact that my exercise of ANR cannot reliably make a belief true does not undermine the claim that ANR is sufficient for epistemic competence. That leaves us with the "final" condition on knowledge, the truth-conducive factor (or factors). This condition in all its forms, broadly understood, makes it likely that the belief is true and that the individual forms the belief because of this. The truth-conducive factor condition on knowledge gives one reason for

thinking that a belief is true. If anything is going to undermine the claim that ANR is sufficient for competence by maintaining something else is required to reliably yield knowledge other than ANR, it will be a feature that satisfies this condition. So, does ANR reliably yield the truth-conducive factor condition on knowledge or does it even need to?

Suppose my vision is bit nearsighted and I think I see and form the belief that I see a colleague walking away from his office down the hall seconds before his student asks me if he is in his office; suppose I am situated such that I am in a better position to see him exit the office and the student just barely glimpses him as he turns a corner. There are three ways this could go and in each of them nothing more than ANR is needed to underwrite the reactive attitudes of the student. First, I might be aware that am a bit nearsighted and take this as a reason to hedge my reply. "I think I saw him just leave his office, but you might want to go check for yourself." Here my ability to recognize and assess my reasons for believing my colleague has left his office manifests in my recognition that my vision is not good enough to fully endorse this belief. If I ignore my beliefs about my vision and reply that he has just left his office, the student's frustration towards me when she later finds that he had not left his office is quite appropriate. Failing to use my beliefs about my poor vision is a failure to exercise ANR. But, when I recognize my poor vision as a reason to at least hedge, then I exercise ANR. In so doing, my ability to believe for normative reasons not only increases my reliability, it partially constitutes it. These considerations apply *mutatis mutandis* to other possible truth-conducive conditions on knowledge (other than the belief condition or the truth condition).

The second way this scenario might go is that I am unaware that I as nearsighted as I am. If I respond that my colleague has just left his office and the student later discovers he was there, it is perfectly reasonable for me to excuse myself. Or, I might apologize by remarking

that I had no idea my eyesight was so bad. Even here, the student's reactive attitudes could be appropriate. It would be completely understandable if she were nonplussed by my lack of awareness about my vision. This reaction would imply not only that I had reason to at least hedge my reply but that I ought to have recognized that reason. And this follows only if she could reasonably expect that I could have recognized that reason, otherwise her attitude is inapt. So either I should have been aware of my poor vision (and thus taken it into account) or I should not have been. If the former, then all that is required is that I had the ability to be aware. Implied in this is that in addition to having the ability to recognize my poor vision as a reason to (at least) hedge my reply, this reason would factor into my beliefs about whether my colleague was in his office. In other words, the student's reactive attitudes are apt if and only if I have ANR. If, on the other hand, there is no reasonable expectation that I should have been aware that my vision was so poor—which, admittedly, is quite implausible—then the student's attitudes are inapt.

In both of the preceding cases, ANR keeps my belief formation in check and thus partially constitutes my reliably satisfying the truth-conducive condition on knowledge. Moreover, my competence is reflected in the responsiveness to reasons implied by ANR. The third and final way this case might go is that both my vision is poor and that I do not have ANR, because I am either globally or temporarily unable to recognize, assess, or revise my beliefs. Since we have already seen that ANR is necessary to underwrite epistemic reactive attitudes, once we remove that ability the associated attitudes are inappropriate.

I think the best explanation of the preceding case is that ANR plays a constitutive role in fulfilling conditions on knowledge (other than truth or belief). While I only focused on reliability, my comments apply equally to other possible conditions on knowledge as well. Consider justification. Since ANR is the ability to recognize and assess justifying reasons for

belief, it follows that the exercise or manifestation of ANR will reliably yield justified beliefs. In fact, even in cases where a person has misleading evidence and she believes on this evidence, if she exercises/manifests ANR in the acquisition of this belief, then she competently, though incorrectly, acquires this belief.[283] Further, default entitlements to belief can be called into question and even revoked when it is clear that one did not assess the reasons for belief—i.e., did not exercise/manifest ANR.[284]

One other likely candidate for epistemic competence in addition to ANR might be responsible believing. Either ANR is constitutive of responsible believing or the requirement of responsible believing for epistemic competence begs the question. In the latter case, if one tries to argue that epistemically responsible behavior is required before one can be epistemically competent, and since as we have seen accountability presupposes evaluability, then one is attempting to argue that epistemically responsible behavior—the kind involved in accountability judgments—is required for competence—the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. But this is impossible; before one can be accountable one must be competent. So then, competence is a necessary condition on epistemically responsible behavior. The upshot is that epistemically responsible behavior cannot be a constituent of epistemic competence in addition to ANR since the latter is a precondition of the former.

I conclude, therefore, that having ANR is necessary and sufficient for epistemic competence. Put differently, when we exercise the cognitive ability of believing for normative reasons, we manifest epistemic competence. So, to be epistemically competent—to be the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes—is nothing over and above being able to recognize, attend to, assess, and revise belief in response to the evidence and reasons

[283] We need not even add the qualifier "assuming she is not culpable in evaluating the evidence" since to exercise or manifest ANR is by definition to evaluate the reasons one has for the belief. So, misleading evidence is possible even when an individual exercises/ manifests ANR.
[284] See Williams, *Problems*, ch. 13.

for (against) it. Just like other dispositions one need not exercise those abilities in order either to have them attributed to one or to be evaluated on their basis. (Of course, if an individual never (or only in extremely rare circumstances) manifested those abilities our attributions and evaluations would be inapt.)

To be clear, ANR is not necessary and sufficient for knowledge, but rather for competence. It is true that generally competent individuals are reliable at attaining knowledge, but there is always the possibility that the world does not cooperate. I may manifest or exercise ANR in my attaining the belief the P, and yet not know that P. This is because P is false. My reasons for thinking that P, however, may be good reasons; they just happen to be wrong. Moreover, my evaluation of those reasons could be thorough and induce belief that P on that basis. It is important to be clear on this since in the next section I shall argue that ANR is knowing how to know. If knowing how to φ implies reliable success at φ-ing when trying, then competence will be the ability to reliably achieve knowledge when trying—i.e., manifesting/exercising ANR. However, the world must cooperate.

6.3. The Ability to Believe for Normative Reasons as Knowing How to Know

Once we understand that having the ability to believe for normative reasons underwrites the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes and that to be epistemically competent just is to be the appropriate target of such attitudes, we see that epistemic competence is

constituted by the ability to believe for normative reasons. To establish that this ability just is knowing how to know, we can investigate the latter concept. If it can be shown that knowing how to know is likewise constituted by the abilities to recognize, attend to, and assess reasons/evidence and to revise belief, then I shall have shown that one is the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes just in case one knows how to know.

When we attribute know-how to an individual, we imply that the individual is sufficiently reliable at achieving the goal or the end of the knowledge-how. So for example when an individual knows how to ride a bicycle, she is sufficiently reliable at succeeding in riding a bicycle. When we say an individual knows how to add, we imply she is sufficiently reliable at succeeding in adding numbers correctly. The object of the know-how under present discussion is attaining knowledge. In the last section, I argued that ANR is sufficient for reliably satisfying the truth conducive condition on knowledge. So, we may wonder what other abilities would be required in order to know how to know. Perhaps someone may think that not only do we need the ability to recognize, attend to, assess reasons for belief, and the ability to revise belief in the light of those reasons, but additionally the ability to recognize reasons as such. It is not unless I think of the reasons/evidence for belief as *reasons/evidence* for belief that I could attend to, assess, and perhaps find those reasons wanting.

On one reading of this, having the ability to recognize reasons/evidence is nothing more than the ability to recognize that some things make other things more or less likely to be the case. This may be either explicit or implicit. Moreover, this seems to depend rather heavily on what concepts the individual possesses. I may, because of the concepts and background knowledge I possess, see the coloration of the clouds in the sky as a reason to bring my umbrella to work. Younger children may see it as a reason to ask Mom and Dad about the weather. Notice that in neither case need the subject explicitly think of the reason as a *reason*

to φ. If so, then knowing how to attend to reasons/evidence amounts to knowing how to attend to the various features of a situation one finds oneself in, which is what I have advocated all along. If one wants to argue that in addition to attention, assessment, and revision, one must have certain recognitional abilities specifically with regard to reasons and evidence, then the burden is on them to refute the picture of reasons/evidence I have just presented. I have only advocated that in some cases our recognition of reasons/evidence is nothing more than the perhaps tacit recognition that some things make other things more likely. It is not enough for an opponent to present an alternative view to this; one must show that the view I advocated is wrong. Therefore, my account of reasons/evidence recognition is not unrealistically onerous.

Are there any other abilities or perhaps propositional knowledge that one must possess? It seems unlikely, but here is one possibility. In coming to know that P, it seems I must have other kinds of knowledge. In coming to know that the coloration of the clouds indicates rain, I must know what rain is, what coloration indicates rain, and so on. Does this imply that knowing how to know is not just the ability to believe for reasons? No. The abilities constitutive of knowing how to know (assuming that it is the ability to attend to, assess, and revise) may likewise, indeed probably do, require propositional knowledge for their exercise, but that propositional knowledge does not constitute the knowledge-how. Knowing how to know is a general or meta-level ability, presupposed in particular instances of its exercise. Knowing how to know, in general, is presupposed in knowing how to know if it is raining. Similarly, I must know how to play piano before I know how to play Beethoven's *Für Elise*.

In addition, knowing how to φ does not imply completely reliable success. I may know how to φ —have the ability to φ —and nevertheless fail to φ in some cases. Achieving the end of know-how requires something analogous to the truth condition in knowledge-that. I

cannot know that the world is flat because it is not. I may think I know this, but am I mistaken. Unless the world cooperates, namely by being such that the proposition justifiably believed is true, I cannot have knowledge that it is. Granted, the cooperation of the world in cases of know-how is more tenuous. I could know how to φ as long as in a *sufficient* number of cases I succeed. This leaves room for cases where I fail and nevertheless retain the know-how. Neither the failure of ANR to attain knowledge nor the fact that propositional knowledge may be required in particular instances of exercising/ manifesting ANR undermine the thesis that ANR constitutes knowing how to know.

To refute that claim, one would have to show that in addition to ANR one possesses propositional attitudes the content of which prescribe how to do what I am doing, viz., acquiring knowledge. It is not enough to show that when I exercise my know-how I must have related propositional knowledge. Of course I must have some knowledge-that in order to *exercise* my knowledge-how in certain ways. Consider that my knowing how to ride a bike requires that I know that is a bike in front of me. I cannot exercise my knowledge how to ride a bike on a Ferris wheel. The exercise of an ability, cognitive or otherwise, needs the appropriate medium and that will require that I have some knowledge of what that medium is. None of this constitutes the knowledge-how. Though, this does raise a potentially more troubling problem.

At the beginning of chapter four, I suggested that one of the reasons why know-how could not be propositional is that presumably we are subject to evaluation on the basis of our knowledge-that. So if we must possess some propositional knowledge in order to know how to know, my account would run into circularity. In a footnote, I suggested that this might not be quite right.[285] I would now like to flesh this out. The reasoning behind this

[285] See fn. 161, above.

objection is based on a false assumption—that we are subject to evaluation on the basis of each piece of knowledge we possess. However, particular beliefs are reactively evaluable only in the context of a range of abilities that bring with them a range of beliefs. We can see this normatively or practically (i.e., based on our common practices).

Normatively, we might suggest that we should be subject to evaluation on the basis of each piece of knowledge we possess. This does not seem right. In chapter two, I argued that some of our beliefs, and thus some of our knowledge, comes to us unbidden and yet we are subject to evaluation on that basis of it. I want to clarify that here. We are subject to evaluation on the basis of beliefs and knowledge that come to us unbidden only after we are in general subject to evaluation; that is, only after norms and standards apply. But some beliefs and knowledge come to us unbidden for which we are not subject to evaluation. The distinction lies in whether we are already competent or not. The epistemically noncompetent are not appraised or evaluated, nor should they be, before the standards of belief and knowledge apply to them. Yet, we do have beliefs and knowledge prior to being competent. Of course, once we attain competence we can be questioned on the basis of pre-competent beliefs and knowledge.[286] Pragmatically, as a matter of actual practice we do not target the noncompetent with epistemic reactive attitudes, even though we do attribute knowledge to them. This alone shows that, if we are attempting to explain and understand an actual practice (which I explicitly stated this work is trying to do), the assumption that we are subject to epistemic reactive attitudes on the basis of each piece of knowledge we possess is false.

[286] Alternatively, we might put this as Williams (*Problems*) does: we might think that we have default entitlements that can be challenged. In the present context, this would amount to pre-competent individuals having default entitlement to belief that is subject to challenge when they become competent. This challenge may arise from others or even the future self.

These considerations show us that knowing how to know is constituted by the ability to believe for normative reasons. Having ANR makes us reliably successful at attaining knowledge. This is what I mean by knowing how to know. Since ANR constitutes epistemic competence, I conclude that one is epistemically competent if and only if one knows how to know. Before ending this section, I would like to address the worry I raised at the beginning of §6.2b about whether the ability to assess one's reason and evidence depends on propositional knowledge about norms and standards.

a. Belief norms, anti-intellectualism, and cognitive abilities

In order to assess one's reasons for belief, it seems that one might need to have prior propositional knowledge about epistemic standards since the ability to assess reasons and evidence, which is partially constitutive of the ability to conform our beliefs to the reasons for (against) them, seems to require that one be aware of or know the standards that govern belief and belief formation. Once we recall Devitt's distinction between represented and embodied rules this worry falls away.[287] Moreover, we can use this distinction to put a different spin on Ryle's regress that intellectualist responses cannot overcome.

According to Devitt, a rule might govern in one of two ways, by being explicitly represented or by being embodied without being represented. If awareness of the norms and standards that govern belief formation must be explicitly represented, then my account would indeed be guilty of smuggling in propositional assumptions. However, if those norms

[287] See §4.3c, above.

could be embodied without explicitly being represented, then the objection fails. Let us investigate this further.

Two independent considerations lead to the conclusion that at least some norms of belief are embodied rather than represented rules; a methodological point and a conceptual point. As a methodological point, "if we fail to posit representations where there are some, we are likely to come across evidence that there are some: our explanations are likely to be inadequate. In contrast, if we posit representations where there are none, it may be difficult to come across evidence that there are none, because with enough representations almost any behavior can be explained."[288] This, Devitt maintains, is to apply what he calls Pylyshyn's razor—the idea that representations ought not to be multiplied without necessity—which he draws from observations Pylyshyn has made in cognitive science:

> one must attribute as much as possible to the capacity of the system...to properties of the functional architecture...one must find the least powerful functional architecture compatible with the range of variation observed"[289]

However one is disposed to react to so-called Pylyshyn's Razor, the conceptual argument for embodied belief norms is far more difficult to undermine.

Suppose that all belief norms govern by being represented. We must ask what that representation amounts to. Those friendly to intellectualist accounts of knowledge-how would maintain that they must be represented propositionally. After all, they are rules for clear/responsible/permissible/virtuous/etc. belief formation. But surely applying the rule when one forms a belief is something that can be done well or poorly. In which case, there would need to be a further represented (propositional) rule, and so on ad infinitum. This is

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[288] Devitt, Michael. *Ignorance of Language.* (Oxford: University Press, 2006.: 52).
[289] Pylyshyn, Zenon. "Rules and Representations: Chomsky and Representational Realism." *The Chomskian Turn.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited, 1991): 244) quoted in (Devitt, *Ignorance,* 51).

just a different way to see Ryle's regress, but with a further problem for the intellectualist. If there are no merely embodied rules of belief formation, then not only does a response like Ginet's in the knowledge-how/ knowledge-that debate fail, it does not even make sense. Recall, the strategy was to appeal to the fact that knowledge-that is manifest in action (what we typically call knowledge-how) without prior or even simultaneous contemplation.[290] The anti-intellectualist could grant this, but then point out that this response could not work in case of represented vs. merely embodied *rules*.

What could it possibly mean to say that we manifest a represented rule when we form a belief other than the manifestation of a rule itself is governed by rules for the manifestation of represented rules? It is either representations all the way down or it is not. If it is not, then some rules govern behavior or thought without being represented at all.[291] A particularly salient example of this is language. Acquiring one's first language does not involve representing phonemes (and morphemes, etc.) by following a further represented

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[290] See §4.1 above.

[291] Another worry crops up at this point, however. Does appeal to merely embodied rules of thought (e.g., belief formation) commit one to an untenable innatism? Are all of these rules (or a sufficient number of them, at least) simply hard-wired into us? If one means by this, are these rules fixed and immutable, then the answer is clearly no. A rule can be "hard-wired" and still be changeable. (The rule might be better thought of as a capacity that manifests in different scenarios and can be cultivated over time. For example, we might have embodied rules concerning simple inferences, but still be subject to bias that affects those rules until we train ourselves—hence, cultivate the ability—to recognize when we are being asked. Kahneman and Tversky's ("Extension versus intuitive reasoning: The conjunction fallacy in probability judgment". *Psychological Review*. 90(4) (1983): 293–315) and Kahneman (*Thinking, Fast and Slow.* (New York: Macmillan, 2011) presents detailed discussion of a variety of different cognitive biases that appear to support the idea that many belief formation rules are hard-wired as capacities.) At most the idea of hard-wired rules commits us to nativism—or, that certain skills and abilities are in some sense built into the mindbrain (Chomsky, N. 'Some Conceptual Shifts in the Study of Language', in L. Cauman, I. Levi, C. Parsons and R. Schwartz (eds) *How Many Questions?: essays in honor of Sidney Morgenbesser,* Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983); that is, the architecture of the mindbrain is so situated as to have certain capacities built-in. But, those skills and abilities need an environment to "activate" them. However, one need not commit to nativism to get the same result. It is an empirical question whether these rules are part of the native architecture of the mindbrain or whether the cognitive system merely develops in such a way that as a matter of fact "writes" those rules due to environmental conditions. However this question is settled and does not affect the general point about the distinction between rules that are represented and rules that are embodied without being represented. See Dummett (*The Seas of Language*, (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon, 1993) chs 1-4) for discussion about language and how we acquire it without representing the rules of grammar; Devitt (*Ignorance*) for a different take on first language acquisition without representation; and, Pylyshyn ("Rules" and *Computation and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) for general considerations about the distinction within cognitive science.

rule. If it did, then the appropriate model of acquiring our first language would have to be something like how we learn our second language, by pairing phonemes (and morphemes) with corresponding first-language terms. That is, it would require translating the second language into the first language and internalizing that translation. But there is no prior language to translate our first language into.[292] Instead, our first language is acquired through exposure to competent language users and subtle correction over time—e.g. using standard past-tense constructions when irregular constructions are grammatically appropriate. Is this not how we acquire basic epistemic norms (or, more generally, most basic norms)?

A young child first learns the difference between the various shapes by repeated use and correction. In doing so, she begins to reinforce a natural tendency to trust Mom and Dad as good sources of information (assuming the parents are not abusive). A slightly older child subtly acquires the same lesson with regard to other adults, e.g., teachers. Slowly she gains more and more norms about justifying claims by giving reasons in favor of them and that some claims are more important than others and require stronger/ better/ more reasons. Along the way she acquires comparative rules, consistency rules, and so forth. Notice that this could all take place without any representations of those rules themselves. In fact, the most general rules, since they govern the more specific rules, would have to be embodied in the functional architecture of the mind in order for later represented rules to find purchase. At least in some cases, early developmental stages being salient, individuals assess the reasons/ evidence for beliefs by manifesting embodied rules of belief formation. So, the ability to assess reasons, even if it does imply awareness of belief norms, does not imply propositional attitudes about those norms.

[292] See Dummett, *Seas of Language*, ch 3.

I began this chapter with a sketch of four features a theory of epistemic competence would need to have in order to account for the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes. I argued that a proper theory of epistemic competence would have to require the possession (and not the explicit exercise) of reasons-responsive, meta-level cognitive abilities capable of influencing belief. I have offered such a theory. To put it more exactly, an agent S is epistemically competent iff she can exercise guidance control over her capacity to recognize, attend to, and assess reasons for belief as well as revise her belief in light of the reasons/evidence for (against) it. Alternatively, epistemic competence is the ability to believe for normative reasons. I suggested that having this ability is to have a kind of know-how. Specifically, when and only when one has these cognitive abilities, one knows how to know.

Since competence is constituted by a cognitive ability (or abilities), it is a dispositional concept. Sometimes that disposition is exercised or manifest and sometimes it is not. However, because the cognitive abilities constitutive of knowing how to know are dispositions, epistemic reactive attitudes are sometimes apt even when those dispositions are not exercised or manifest.[293] Additionally, the very notion of an ability implies reasons-responsiveness. It does not imply perfect reliability. Nor does it imply that the reasons we have for exercising that ability are never sufficient. Rather, our (not) being in a state of exercising that ability must be reliably motivated by reasons for (against) being in that state. This, of course, will vary with the ability in question as well as its domain of exercise.

This leaves two more features to account for. Some of our cognitive abilities immediately aim at true belief. Their goal is accurately to grasp the world. Other of our

[293] I restrict myself to only sometimes because their is an implicit "but should have been" qualifier attached. This, in turn, implies that the individual could have exercised or manifest the abilities in question. So, in those cases where one's cognitive abilities are impaired due to unknowingly ingesting psychotropic drugs, our epistemic reactive attitudes are inapt. They are inapt not because one does not exercise the relevant cognitive ability, but because one could not have exercised that ability.

abilities immediately aim at assessing the content taken in by the former abilities. And still others aim at knowledge. For example, the goal of our perceptual capacities is to accurately represent the world, and the goal of our ability to assess reasons and evidence—ANR—is to determine whether the representation we have is good enough. The latter meta-level, or reflective, abilities function to ensure we minimize mistakes by providing a way for other information and background knowledge to enter into the process of belief formation. The cognitive abilities constitutive of knowing how to know are such meta-level abilities. ANR is a governing ability, one which, when exercised or manifest, affects what and how we believe. In other words, ANR, being constituted by the abilities to recognize, attend to, and assess reasons as well as revise belief, influences what we believe. But then, to know how to know one must only possess (and need not explicitly exercise) reasons-responsive, meta-level cognitive abilities capable of indirectly influencing belief. This concludes the articulation of my account of epistemic competence. In the final section, I shall test my account of epistemic competence against three of the cases we have raised throughout this work.

6.4. Control and Awareness

Throughout the earlier chapters, I raised cases meant to bring out intuitions about epistemic reactive attitudes and their appropriateness. In this section I re-examine three of these in

order to illustrate how my account of knowing how to know fares against our common ground-level epistemic reactive attitudes. Allow me to restate the cases:[294]

> **Lunar skepticism**: Walter is in his mid-twenties, graduated from college, and now works as a mid-level manager. In his spare time, Walter is an astronomy enthusiast. Recently, after watching a program on the history channel about the conspiracy behind the lunar landing, Walter has become an evangelist of sorts denying humans have ever landed on the moon.
>
> Emma is a five-year old, the daughter of one of Walter's good friends. Emma loves the Air and Space Museum and is fascinated by the moon. Her parents read to her all about the moon including stories about the lunar landing. One day when Walter is over for dinner, he becomes enthusiastic about his newfound skepticism about the lunar landing and tells Emma all about it. Now Emma tells everyone that the lunar landing never happened.
>
> **Bipolar Belief**: Thom suffers from bipolar disorder but has yet to be diagnosed. Paranoia presents in Thom's manic states. He has just had his first manic break and believes that his wife is cheating on him and begins to accuse her forcefully while hurling terrible insults at her.
>
> **Climate Science Denial**: Joe S. Pack implicitly believes whatever Fox News reports. As a result he fails to believe that humans are causing climate change. In fact, he believes the contrary that humans are not causing climate change and the temperature and weather fluctuations are the result of a solar cycle. His implicit trust in Fox News causes him to be blind to any contrary evidence. If pressed, Joe would claim to be well informed and have fair and balanced opinions about the matter. He would report what he has heard on Fox News all the while thinking he was reasonable. He might even think that he does not trust Fox News in everything but attempts to get a well-rounded perspective. In fact, he does not look anywhere but Fox News for his information, including his information about climate change.[295]

These cases involve individuals that are the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes and individuals that are not the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes and some of these cases present counter-examples to the idea that it is control or awareness that underwrites epistemic competence. I shall argue my account of knowing how to know nicely

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[294] This is not to suggest that my account of knowing how to know cannot meet the demands of all the cases we have discussed. The cases we examine in this section will be illustrative of how the various features of knowing how to know would meet those other cases that space does not allow us to discuss.

[295] To modify this case make his lack of awareness be about contrary views or about his failure to recognize the entailment from his complete trust in Fox News to the climate change belief.

handles each of these cases as well as the intuitions behind the motivation for control and/or awareness requirement. Let us first focus on the role of control and awareness and then look at each of the cases in turn.

a. Knowing how to know: control and awareness

In chapter two I suggested there is an intuitive connection between control and responsibility, but that we do not have control over belief. In chapter five I argued that there is indeed a kind of control we exercise in the epistemic realm, but that it is not control over belief. Rather, we exercise guidance control over our cognitive abilities, some of which are constitutive of epistemic competence. There is a subtle but very important difference between exercising control over belief and exercising control over our cognitive abilities. To exercise control over belief, either directly or indirectly, is to be able to bring it about that I form a belief that P.[296] But as we saw in chapter two, we simply cannot do this for either conceptual or for contingent psychological reasons. Further, what "control" we exercise over

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[296] Meylan (*Foundations*, ch 3) argues that to have control over the acquisition of a determinable belief is to exercise what she calls theoretical control. This kind of control requires "performing one or several more basic action(s) consisting in a truth-oriented modification of [one's] current set of evidence … motivated by a desire to acquire true belief" (68). Importantly, this could involve an indirect modification of "my cognitive habits or competencies" (fn). Where we differ is in thinking of this as the kind of control that grounds epistemic responsibility. I agree that we do exercise this control over our cognitive abilities (what she calls our habits and competencies), but this is not to exercise control over belief, not even determinable belief. I may have never considered the question of whether p and still come to believe that p on basis of an exercise of my cognitive abilities. But, if I must be able to indirectly control my belief acquisitions in the way Meylan maintains in order to be responsible for them, I must have some determinable belief in mind.

Moreover, as we saw in chapter two, exercising indirect control over belief is insufficient since control and awareness come apart. I could hardly be responsible for even an action I was wholly unaware of, even if I was in full control of it. For example, in a particularly troubling episode of the television series CSI, investigators are led to a website that shows a victim being buried alive. Every time they look at the website (which they do in order to gain clues as to the victim's whereabouts), a fan kicks on that sucks the oxygen out the casket, thus hastening the victim's death. Even though the investigator's fully control this flow of oxygen, they are unaware of it. The possibility for control without awareness as in this case is why my account of knowing how to know requires awareness of cognitive capacities in order for them be owned in the way they need to be for us to be subject to epistemic reactive attitudes on the basis of them.

beliefs is restricted to indirect causal influence. When I exercise guidance control over my cognitive abilities, I do not control my beliefs, I merely influence them.

This is not to say that control is not a part of the story, though. When a subject knows how to know, they are able to exercise guidance control over their cognitive abilities; their beliefs are the result of exercising or manifesting cognitive abilities they *could* guide. This qualifier is important because it allows evaluation for cognitive habits. The effort it takes to exercise our cognitive abilities, to be hesitant in light of scant evidence, to be diligent in fact-checking, and so on often costs a lot. We have to take in and assimilate vast amounts of information in order to solve simple problems and meet mundane goals. If we stopped to scrutinize every belief and decision we would get little done. Our cognitive systems create shortcuts and we form beliefs by manifesting cognitive habits. However, since knowing how to know requires only that we have the ability to assess reasons and evidence and to revise beliefs; the epistemically competent are the appropriate targets of epistemic reactive attitudes even if they failed to exercise those abilities. The upshot is that control plays a part in epistemic competence because it plays a part in what it means to have a cognitive ability. Awareness, too, plays a role.

The discussion in chapter three of the searchlight view Sher repudiates provided a clue to understanding epistemic competence. Recall that Sher's goal is to try to understand and explain the knowledge condition on responsibility. The basic idea is that it is not enough that one voluntarily chooses to φ, but one must also knowingly φ. This has been taken for granted as a kind of awareness of the act or the wrongfulness of the act. But Sher argues that this cannot be right since we might (rightly) be morally responsible for omissions, in which case there is no awareness of the act or the wrongfulness of the act since there is no act. His favored disjunctive account is supposed to capture an intuitive idea. In case of

omissions, agents are responsible not just because they are aware of the act or the wrongfulness of the act, but because they failed to meet norms that their constituent psychology *could have met*. As we noted in chapter two, mere awareness is tantamount to passive observation of what is happening, like the "awareness" an operating system has of the programs it is running. So when it comes to belief, my being merely aware of the formation of beliefs is not sufficient.

Yet, structural features of one's psychology—namely one's cognitive abilities—are the central feature of knowing how to know. That is, some of those abilities constitute knowing how to know. So when I fail to believe something I should have believed or, I believe something I should not have believed, my failure is traceable to my cognitive abilities. It is a failure to manifest or exercise abilities to recognize the wrongfulness of the belief or that the reasons/evidence for it falls below an applicable standard. But, again, to have those abilities is to recognize that I can exercise them; it is to be aware (at least non-reflectively) that I have them and because knowing how to know requires the ability to recognize and assess reasons/evidence, it is to be aware of when to exercise them. Thus, the failure in a doxastic omission is traceable to me. Notice that neither control nor awareness by themselves underwrites epistemic competence because neither are necessary nor sufficient. Control without awareness is blind, while awareness without control is lame. But even together they fail to explain epistemic competence unless they are understood as facets of a more integrated ability.

b. Knowing how to know: the cases

Now that I have elaborated on the role of control and awareness in knowing how to know, I want to return to an examination of the cases. I shall proceed by first stating what intuitions the case is meant to bring about and why these matter. Then, I will present the reasons why my own account of knowing how to know both satisfies the intuitive judgments we have about the cases as well as how it overcomes the difficulties alternative accounts face.

Let us begin with the case that began this inquiry into epistemic competence. In **lunar landing**, we have two individuals with beliefs about the moon landing. One is an adult who has graduated from college (and therefore we can assume is generally competent) and the other is a five-year old. Accordingly, one is the appropriate target of epistemic evaluation, in general, and the other is not. The range of beliefs for which we may appropriately evaluate Walter is extremely large while the range of beliefs for which Emma is evaluable is quite small. What explains this? Why is Walter the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes while Emma is not? A simplistic, but nevertheless unhelpful answer is that Walter is an adult and Emma a child. But, this does not answer the relevant sense of the question. We might just raise the further question, what is it about being an adult that makes one epistemically competent?

Walter, we can assume, knows how to know; as a college graduate, he is able to attend to and assess reasons for belief as well as to revise his belief in light of those reasons. Alternatively, Emma does not have the cognitive abilities constitutive of knowing how to know. In particular, she does not have the ability to assess reasons for belief; for a range of beliefs she would not be able to recognize a good reason to believe something from a bad reason to believe. But arguably she does not sufficiently own her cognitive processes either. Her belief and subsequent reporting of the falsity of the lunar landing is based on implicit

trust in adults with whom she is acquainted. Walter is a good friend of the family and has, we can assume, always been kind to Emma and talked with her about space. She trusts Walter and so she reports what Walter says about the lunar landing. Notice that we can fill out the story such that Emma asks Walter different questions each time she sees him. Suppose she does not understand something about what Walter has told her and so the next time she asks him about it. This shows that she is both aware of her beliefs about the moon landing as well as their source (even if she could not articulate that is what she is aware of). Further, it shows she has some control over the acquisition of the beliefs about the moon landing. That is, it shows that she can act in such a way as to gather more information, which in turn shows that she knows where to go to gather more information. If this is right, then what explains her non-competence is neither her awareness of, nor her control over, the relevant belief acquisition. What does fit rather nicely into our intuition that she is not competent is that she lacks the ability to assess her reasons for belief and that she does not own her cognitive processes.

She believes (and acts on those beliefs) whatever someone she trusts tells her. Many reasons for belief, for Emma, are merely motivating reasons. They bring about or cause her to believe various things, but since for a wide range of beliefs she lacks the ability to recognize reasons as reasons to believe, no reason within that range is a normative reason for her. But, if no reason within that rage of beliefs is a normative reason, she cannot assess whether the reason is a good (enough) reason to believe. The explanation of this lies in the fact that Emma has not developed the relevant cognitive abilities; she mostly only causally interacts with the world, but to be the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes, one must also be able to normatively interact with the world. That is, one must be able to recognize and attend to/assess reasons for belief/action (and to revise her belief in light of

that assessment). To reiterate, abilities are dispositions. So being evaluated on the basis of a belief requires only that one has those abilities and that were they to be exercised, a salient cause—a central part of the explanation—of the belief would be the exercise of the ability.

Cases like **Lunar Skepticism** are helpful in highlighting the importance of general epistemic competence. They help to focus questions about epistemic evaluation on the question of what makes an individual the appropriate target of evaluation at all. Sometimes generally competent individuals—i.e., those who are the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes, in general—are exempt from those attitudes as well. Sometimes, that is, features of one's belief formation undermine an individual's competence. In which case, we would not just excuse their believing as they do, we would exempt or absolve them from evaluation altogether. **Bipolar Belief**, is meant to be an example of a generally competent individual whose competence is temporarily and restrictedly undermined.

I have argued that epistemic competence is constituted by the ability to believe for normative reasons. I have further argued that these abilities are dispositions and as such do not need to be exercised in order for an individual to be competent. It is enough that the individual only possesses the ability. This means that epistemic reactive attitudes are appropriate when directed at individuals who either exercise or manifest those abilities in forming a belief or should have—and thus could have—exercised or manifested those abilities. The upshot is that a salient causal explanation of the belief is that those very abilities were exercised or manifested. In **Bipolar Belief**, the salient causal explanation of Thom's belief is not his ability to believe for normative reasons. Rather, it is a disorder in his brain that results in his belief. Further, that disorder simultaneously renders it impossible to exercise or manifest that ability. Hence, we could not say of Thom that he should have exercised or manifested his competence because there is no way that he could have.

It might be objected that cases like these support rather than undermine the role of control and awareness in epistemic competence. Thom fails to be the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes precisely because he had no control over his belief or belief formation and that he was unaware of his mental disease. I think this response misses the real reason why Thom is exempt. Suppose we fast-forward a few years. Thom has been diagnosed and has become aware that his manic episodes have recurring features, one of which is powerful beliefs about his wife's infidelity. We can imagine that when he finds himself in such situations he diligently examines the evidence (and suppose that there is some evidence for this, but that any other reasonable adult would not be swayed by it) and that he is fully aware that his belief is the result of his disease. So he exercises some control and awareness. Still it seems he is exempt. Why? He lacks the ability to believe this for normative reasons. More exactly, his normally functioning ability to believe for normative reasons is undermined by the disease. It is true that he lacks control over his doxastic *situation*. It is not control over his *belief*, but control to *exercise or manifest the relevant cognitive abilities* that he lacks. The cognitive ability to assess reasons and revise belief is ineffectual. As such, he ceases to be appropriately responsive to reasons. When in such manic episodes he ceases to know how to know (at least within certain domains, but perhaps globally as well).

Finally, as should be clear from earlier discussions, a theory of epistemic competence as knowing how to know explains the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes when it comes to doxastic omissions. There are two broad kinds of doxastic omissions: one involves having a belief one should not have (positive doxastic omission) and the other involves not having a belief one should have (negative doxastic omission). On the one hand, sometimes we can be evaluated on the basis of a belief that, given our evidence, background beliefs, and so on, it is unreasonable for us to have. Joe, in **Climate Science Denial**, believes that

climate change is a hoax and he came to this belief because of his implicit trust in Fox News. Since his belief is the result of his trust in Fox News, we know it is not the result of his own scientific background. Hence Joe has beliefs that make it unreasonable for him to believe as he does. Specifically, he has beliefs about his own lack of expertise or even above average understanding of climate science, or beliefs about examining multiple sources of evidence. These beliefs about himself make it unreasonable to believe what he does and yet his belief persists. His failure to assess the reasons for/ against the truth of climate change entails that he should have withheld the belief. That he does not opens him up to evaluation precisely because he failed to exercise those abilities. What explains the appropriateness of epistemic reactive attitudes directed at Joe is the fact that he does not exercise or manifest his competence in believing as he does.

Additionally, we might find that Joe comes by his implicit trust in Fox News honestly. As a matter of course, Joe was exposed to indoctrination that eventuated in his trust in Fox News and thus his climate science denial. This fact makes his belief based on his implicit trust understandable, but does it also mean that Joe is not the appropriate target of evaluations on that basis of beliefs with that source? Not at all. The only way that our upbringing can exempt us from evaluation is if it radically alters our capacity to become epistemically competent. That is, if our experiences and upbringing proscribe the development of the cognitive abilities necessary and sufficient for epistemic competence, then, and only then, can we be exempt from epistemic reactive attitudes due to lack of competence.[297] This would require a radical alteration of one's interpretation of reality. Because our basic cognitive processes are automatic and subpersonal, the only way to derail the natural development of those processes into cognitive abilities (in individuals without

[297] As opposed to the other reasons why one may be exempt.

prior mental disorders) would be through radical and persistent manipulation. So, the fact that Joe believes as he does on the basis of an implicit trust in an unreliable source that he innocently acquired does nothing to undermine his epistemic competence, and therefore the aptness of our evaluations directed at him.[298]

The preceding discussion about Joe also shows why negative doxastic omissions do not exempt us from evaluations. As in the case of positive doxastic omissions, the reason why individuals are the appropriate targets of evaluations is that they failed to exercise or manifest abilities that they have (and that they should have exercised or manifested). When an individual does not believe something they should, they have not exercised their competence. Joe's implicit trust in Fox News is a good example. Joe should believe that Fox News is not very reliable. Unless Joe has been sequestered for his entire life and exposed only to Fox News and nothing else at all, his implicit trust is unfounded. But, of course, he has multiple reasons to think that Fox News is unreliable. Or, at the very least, to realize that it is really bad policy to use only one source for information. This is especially true when the information you are trying to get has important implications. To return to the present point, though, the indoctrination that resulted in Joe's implicit trust in Fox News was not so radical as to sufficiently derail Joe's normal cognitive development. If this is right, then Joe has the cognitive abilities—the epistemic competence—to realize that one should not trust only one source of information, especially if one does not understand the subject matter sufficiently enough to judge the veracity of the claims. Hence, Joe is the appropriate target of epistemic reactive attitudes directed at him.

Each of these cases—**Lunar Skepticism, Bipolar Belief,** and **Climate Science Denial**—illustrate both the importance of thinking about general epistemic competence as

[298] In §3.3, I raised a worry about the possibility of unconscious acquisition of cognitive habits leading to exemption. This brief discussion about cognitive development addresses that worry.

well as why that competence is constituted by the ability to believe for normative reasons—by knowing how to know. **Lunar Skepticism** highlights the fact that some individuals are the appropriate targets of epistemic reactive attitudes and some are not. **Bipolar Belief** shows us that the issue concerns more than the child/adult divide since some otherwise competent individuals may have that competence undermined in particular instances. Finally, cases like **Climate Science Denial** point to the fact we often rightly evaluate individuals for omissions and that an ability-based account of epistemic competence explains why this should be so.

Conclusion

When we evaluate individuals on the basis of their beliefs, we make salient the fact that epistemic agents are the objects of evaluation. Put differently, we do not appraise or assess the beliefs of others as abstract propositions, but rather, we appraise and assess individuals; we highlight the fact that beliefs reflect our abilities and evaluative judgments. As such, when we seek to understand the conditions under which those appraisals and assessments are appropriate, we must look to deep features of our cognitive lives. For in accounting for our epistemic competence in this way we are able to avoid otherwise troubling puzzles.

Prima facie, the appropriateness of the participant reactive attitudes we direct at others seems to be grounded in the control over, or awareness of, our beliefs. It is thought that something must connect the believer to the belief in such a way as to explain why the belief is attributable to the *believer*. If she had control over beliefs (or a sufficient number of them),

we could easily explain why certain of our evaluations are apt. Likewise, one might think that conscious awareness of one's beliefs plays this role. But neither control nor awareness, once properly understood, could possibly serve as a ground. On the one hand, we simply do not have the kind of control over belief that we would need. On the other hand, we are rightly evaluated on the basis of doxastic omissions. What is needed is something that could fulfill the role(s) control and awareness are thought to have without falling into the same problems. Thinking of doxastic omissions highlights the fact that whatever story we give must also explain the omission; why did S fail to believe that P when she should have? This question suggests that the aptness of evaluation, thus epistemic competence, is grounded in *how* an individual believes and that competent individuals know how to know.

An immediate worry arises as to the nature of know-how. When we know how to do something do we simply have knowledge-that or is know-how something different? I argued that the choice is not binary. There are some kinds of knowledge-how that are nothing over and above having certain abilities; there are other kinds of knowledge-how that do require corresponding propositional knowledge. Of particular interest, is the claim that lower-level cognitive abilities are a kind of knowledge-how. From here we can develop which of those abilities are necessary and sufficient for epistemic competence. Of all the various cognitive abilities that we acquire and develop throughout our lives, three suggest themselves. First, an individual must be able to recognize reasons that count in favor of believing. Second, an individual must be able to assess those reasons. Finally, she must be able to revise and adjust her belief on the basis of that assessment. Together, these abilities comprise the ability to believe for normative reasons and constitute epistemic competence.

Grounding epistemic competence in cognitive ability situates my theory within virtue epistemology. The driving motivation of this approach to epistemology is a commitment to

the centrality of epistemic agents. If we want to understand an epistemic phenomenon we should start with knowers. Most discussion of this has focused on traditional epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge and justification,[299] though, some has instead centered on non-traditional questions.[300] This work can be seen as an addition to the latter. By focusing on the epistemic agent, we can go beyond seeking to understand questions about when individuals are justified or warranted in their belief, by seeking to explain the appropriateness of applying norms and standards to individuals in general. Perhaps most importantly, in understanding that epistemic competence is constituted by cognitive abilities, we use our epistemological theorizing to investigate those abilities. In so doing, we can resurrect the ancient idea, though expressed differently, that in knowing about knowledge, belief, and our intellectual capacities and abilities, we can regulate our epistemic endeavors in such a way as to become better knowers. In other words, perhaps our epistemological theories might make us better at knowing how to know.

,[299] See Sosa, "Raft;" *Perspective*; *Virtue Epistemolgy*; *Reflective Knowledge*; *Knowing Full Well*; Greco, *Skeptics*; "Nature of Ability;" *Achieving Knowledge*; Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*.

[300] See especially, Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*; Baehr, Jason S. *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011);. Kvanvig, *Value of Knowledge*, 2003.

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Curriculum Vitae

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